A Comprehensive Exposition of Selected Verses from the Supplication of Abu Hamza Thumali

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani

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Volume 1

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Sayyid al-Shuhada (peace be upon him) said:

متیٰ غبتَ حتّیٰ تحتاجَ إلیٰ دلیلٍ یدلُّ علیک؟

When, O Lord, did you ever withdraw your presence, rendering us dependent on external guidance to find you? (Iqbāl al-A'māl, vol. 1, p. 349)

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Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
ء	ʼ	م	m
ب	b	ن	n
ت	t	و	w
ث	th	ه	h
ج	j	ي	y
ح	ḥ	ة	ah; at
خ	kh	ى	á
د	d		
ذ	dh	Long Vowels	
ر	r	ا	ā
ز	z	و	ū
س	s	ي	ī
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ	Short Vowels	
ض	ḍ	ـَ	a
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ	ـِ	i
ع	ʻ		
غ	gh	Persian Letters	
ف	f	پ	P
ق	q	چ	Ch
ك	k	ژ	Zh
ل	l	گ	G

بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم
الحمدُ لِله ربِّ العالمين
و صلّى اللهُ على محمّدٍ و آلِه الطّاهرين
و لعنةُ اللهِ على أعدائهم أجمعين

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon Muhammad and his pure family, and may Allah's curse be upon all of their enemies.

With boundless gratitude and heartfelt praise, we exalt the most holy and sacred essence of God, who, through the manifestation of the Words of Existence, brought the realm of potentiality from the veil of nothingness into the domain of being. From among them, humanity, the lineage of Adam, was adorned with the garment of divine morality and the embodiment of the Lord's exalted attributes. We bestow our blessings and prayers upon the noble Prophets and the highly esteemed messengers of God, who carried the immense responsibility of prophethood. They led receptive souls toward the horizon of unity and transcendence. In particular, the seal of the prophets (Prophet Muhammad) and the Infallibles (upon whom be peace) brought the prophetic tradition to its culmination. In their words and deeds, the virtues of morality and the truths of faith have attained the highest degree of realization and manifestation.

The comprehensiveness of the Dua Abu Hamza in explaining the attributes of the servants and the quality of their relationship with the Lord

Within the body of prayers narrated from the Infallibles (peace be upon them), the supplication of Abu Hamza Thumali, attributed to Imam Sajjad(peace be upon him), stands out for its comprehensiveness. This supplication offers a detailed and sincere exploration of the servant's state and attributes concerning God. It meticulously describes the conditions and qualities that define the relationship between creation and the Creator within servitude.

Exposition of the Spiritual Characteristics and the Manner of Behavior and Speech of the Servants in the Dua of Abu Hamza

In this prayer, the Imam (peace be upon him) directly and unambiguously addresses God's servants' spiritual qualities, behaviors, words, and thoughts. He dissects these aspects from various perspectives, clarifying their origins within the human heart and mind. He delves into this crucial element of humankind's journey

toward the Exalted God with such depth that it seems he expresses these sentiments specifically for the reader or listener, leaving no room to evade their implications.

Understanding the Human Condition with the Divine

This supplication is an overwhelming introspection into the nature of human existence and our relationship with the divine. Through it, we are confronted with the essential nature of our being and our rightful place in the presence of an immeasurably greater power. It compels us to consider cultivating a meaningful connection and establishing genuine communication with God despite our limitations and attributes. It offers an acute exploration of the human condition to the divine. Through his words, the Imam delves into the complexities of our inherent imperfections and tendencies, examining the influence of earthly desires, psychological vulnerabilities, and external temptations that can sway our judgment and distance us from our spiritual potential. He candidly warns man about the potential consequences of these internal struggles.

Moreover, this act of supplication ignites within believers a fervent longing for divine favor and compels them to embark on a path of spiritual closeness to the divine. This occurs through vividly portraying the Lord's boundless mercy, compassion, and benevolence. This description instills a deep faith in those seeking spiritual truth, assuring them that God's mercy and kindness are always available, regardless of the circumstances. This supplication evokes a powerful sense of connection with the divine realm. Readers often feel the Imam himself is guiding them in their prayers, offering heartfelt supplications on their behalf. This reflective resonance is why great scholars and devout individuals have long cherished its recitation, particularly during the sacred nights of Ramadan. In other words, they find a potent source of spiritual renewal and illumination. Indeed, those who engage with this supplication thoughtfully often describe experiencing a surge of spiritual peace and joy, a testament to the transformative power of its lofty concepts and evocative language.

This supplication fosters a deep self-reflection, prompting individuals to identify how their shortcomings and limitations are barriers to divine proximity and connection with the Lord. It highlights how their focus on the material world, indulgence in desires, and the pursuit of worldly possessions prevent them from receiving the blessings of the bountiful Creator and block their path to spiritual growth.

The Comprehensiveness of the Dua Abu Hamza in Explaining the Obstacles of Spiritual Wayfaring

The Imam (peace be upon him) elaborates on the obstacles of spiritual wayfaring, the arduous paths, the tiresome bottlenecks, the satanic and tempting traps of worldly attachments, and the world of illusions and imaginations. His explanations are so vivid and detailed that they resonate with an almost personal experience as if he has traversed those difficulties. In other words, all the obstacles to proximity and the barriers to the path are mentioned in the aspect of the human attachment to the world. On the opposite side, which is the aspect of the divine and the Eternal Essence, the attributes and qualities of the Most Gracious God are mentioned in His mercy, forgiveness, covering, pardon, and overlooking.[1] Thus, humanity exists between the opposing forces of fear and hope. Driven by a healthy apprehension of one's actions and sustained by faith in God's infinite mercy and grace, we strive to move closer to the divine and overcome the challenges of the *nafs* (self).

The Radiant Hope and Divine Compassion in the Dua Abu Hamza

This supplication unfolds a powerful testament to God's boundless mercy. It illuminates the hearts and souls of the faithful with the radiant hope and joy found in His forgiveness and abundant generosity. In this dua (supplication), God's absolute mercy is manifested, and the light of hope of forgiveness and the generosity of the Lord is fully revealed in the souls and hearts.

The Imam (peace be upon him) imagines himself as a disobedient and sinful servant who, by disobeying his Master's commands, has incurred His anger and wrath. He confesses his weakness and inability to obey and submit, and this humility invites deep reflection and introspection, urging individuals to contemplate the nature of their shortcomings and vulnerabilities.

The evocative nature of the supplication has presented an exciting challenge for some scholars and experts. The raw and unfiltered portrayal of human failings within the context of an utterance attributed to an infallible Imam has led to various interpretations. Some have suggested that the Imam was speaking in a pedagogical role, using the language of a sinner to guide others toward self-realization. Others have proposed that he was temporarily setting aside his exalted status to immerse himself in the emotions and experiences of ordinary individuals.[2]

However, the sincerity and earnestness conveyed by the Imam's words and the depth of his connection with the divine in this prayer cast doubt on these interpretations. He unmistakably positions himself as flawed and fallible, seeking forgiveness and communion with a higher power. This act of humility mirrors the

approach of the other infallible Imams (peace be upon them), the prophets of God, and saints ('Awliyā'Allāh or those vested with the authority of Allah), who have acknowledged their vulnerabilities and imperfections amidst their spiritual journeys.

Khwaja Abdullah Ansari says,

الهی چون در تو می‌نگرم از جمله تاجدارانم و تاج بر سر و چون بر خود می‌نگرم از جمله خاکسارانم و خاک بر سر.[3]

By your light, God, I perceive myself as one who wears a crown. Yet, when I see myself alone, I am but dust, adorned with a crown.

The Imam adopts a stance of humility, viewing himself not as separate from but truly one with the ordinary people. He holds himself to the same standards and applies the same critical lens with which he would assess anyone else.

Ascribing all Beauty, Attributes, Purity, and Perfection to the Holy Divine

The late, consummate mystic Hajj Sayyid Hashim Haddad often remarked, "When I gaze upon myself, I perceive that the Exalted God has not fashioned upon this earthly plane a creature more flawed than myself."

This sentiment lies at the heart of the "order of knowledge." It posits that all good qualities, purity, and beauty ultimately originate from the essence of the Divine Being. Human beings, as creations, possess no inherent claims to such attributes. Instead, they are reflections of the divine source, received and experienced through acts of worship and submission.

Therefore, genuine praise and recognition are reserved for the Divine alone. All beings, irrespective of their position or accomplishments, share a fundamental need and sense of humility to the eternal source. The closer one moves towards abstraction and pure monotheism, the more thoroughly this reality of true servitude manifests.

Attaining absolute infallibility remains unique to the divinely chosen Imams (peace be upon them). In their state, any sense of self or claims to personal attributes completely dissolves, leaving nothing but pure servitude and oneness with the Divine.

The Supplication of Abu Hamza Thumali explores the heartfelt concept of devotion, with its most perfect realization embodied by the Infallible Imams. Here,

the focus narrows to Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) and the Du'a Abu Hamza al-Thumali, which provides a window into an intuitive spiritual state.[4]

With its intensely meaningful themes, this supplication offers a rewarding experience through recitation and deep reflection. Its value extends beyond the sacred nights of Ramadan, becoming beneficial at any time.

An Analysis and Annotation of the Du'a of Abu Hamza al-Thumali: Insights from Ramadan Gatherings at the Qaim Mosque, Tehran

During a Ramadan visit to Tehran some years ago, my late father, His Eminence Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani, offered insightful interpretations of this supplication for a gathering of distinguished scholars and companions at the Qaim Mosque. Unfortunately, only fragments of those discussions remain, transcribed by his close relations. These transcripts revealed an incomplete translation, prompting me to translate the remaining sections. Therefore, this work combines the late Sayyid's commentary and my translation, acknowledging the inevitable differences in style and approach.

و العُذرُ عندَ كِرامِ النّاسِ مَقبولٌ.

Among those of good character, an apology is readily accepted.

Of course, this collection only partially comments on Abu Hamza's entire Du'a. Instead, it is a portion of the supplication's paragraphs that I could record from his speeches. The remaining speeches were either unrecorded, or I am unaware of their fate.

Recognizing that incomplete knowledge does not preclude valuable insights, we present this partial commentary on the Du'a of Abu Hamza al-Thumali. Dedicated friends and scholars have diligently transcribed and edited the available recordings, bringing this wisdom to seekers of meaning and understanding in a clear and accessible format.

شكَرَ الله مساعيهم الجميلة.

May God reward them for their efforts.

Commentary and Translation of the Du'a of Abu Hamza al-Thumali by the Son of the Late Scholar

This work offers an analysis and translation of the Du'a of Abu Hamza al-Thumali, attributed to the Infallible Imams (peace be upon them). Driven by a deep appreciation for this unique text and witnessing its devout reception among pious individuals, I, the humble servant–son of the late scholar – embarked on a twenty-five-year exploration of its depths.

Upon arriving in Qum three years after my father's passing, I had the privilege of visiting Lady Fatima al-Ma'suma's holy shrine (peace be upon her). This experience sparked a deep interest in the themes explored within the supplication. Since then, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan, I have regularly discussed these subjects with esteemed colleagues and friends. Recognizing the vastness of this knowledge, I approach my contributions with humility, viewing myself as a vessel seeking to capture a few precious drops of wisdom from this boundless ocean.

May the source of all wisdom grant me the insight to grasp the profundity of these truths, the diligence to embody them in action, and the grace to ascend toward the highest levels of understanding and status of nearness to the divine.

اللهمّ ألحقنا بعبادك الّذين هم بالبدار إليك يُسارعون و بابك على الدّوام يطرقون و إيّاك في اللّيل و النّهار يعبدون!...

O Allah, may we, like those devoted souls who yearn for Your presence, find ourselves drawn ever closer to You, offering heartfelt devotion in every waking and sleeping moment.

I ask the Exalted God for the success of realizing the truths of this noble supplication and following the path and school of the Master of Prostration, Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn,[5] his fathers, and his infallible sons, for all Shiites and lovers of the Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali).

قم، عتبهٔ مقدّسهٔ کریمهٔ اهل بیت، فاطمه معصومه سلام الله علیها
غروب سی‌ام ماه مبارک رمضان ۱۴۳۸
و أنا الرّاجی عفو ربّه
سیّد محمدمحسن حسینی طهرانی

Qum, the holy land of the Karimah of Ahl al-Bayt (The Generous Lady of the Household of the Prophet), Fatima al-Ma'suma, peace be upon her.

Sunset of the thirtieth day of the blessed month of Ramadan 1438 AH.

The one who hopes for the forgiveness of his Lord,

Sayyid Muhammad Muhsin Husayni Tihrani.

أعوذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيطانِ الرَّجيم
بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمٰنِ الرَّحيم
و صَلَّى اللهُ علىٰ خَيرِ خَلقِهِ محمَّدٍ و آلِهِ الطّاهرين
و لَعنَةُ اللهِ علىٰ أعدائِهِم أجمَعين

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon Muhammad and his pure family, and may Allah's curse be upon all of their enemies.

The Status of Abu Hamza al-Thumali

Abu Hamza al-Thumali was a companion of Imam al-Sajjad and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon them).[6] This supplication is attributed to him because, according to a narration by Shaykh Tusi in his book Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, Abu Hamza al-Thumali transmitted the supplication from Imam al-Sajjad. According to his account, Imam al-Sajjad (peace be upon him) devoted the majority of Ramadan nights to fervent prayer. Upon concluding his devotions, he would then recite this supplication.[7]

إلهي لا تُؤَدِّبني بِعُقوبَتِكَ، و لا تَمكُر بي في حيلَتِكَ! مِن أينَ لِيَ الخَيرُ يا رَبِّ، و لا يوجَدُ إلّا مِن عندِكَ؟! و مِن أينَ لِيَ النَّجاةُ و لا تُستَطاعُ إلّا بِكَ؟! لا الّذي أحسَنَ استَغنى عن عَونِكَ و رحمَتِكَ، و لا الّذي أساءَ و اجتَرَأَ علَيكَ و لَم يُرضِكَ خَرَجَ عن قدرَتِكَ!

إلهي لا تُؤَدِّبني بِعُقوبَتِكَ.

O my Lord, O my God! Do not chastise me with Your punishment!

و لا تَمكُر بي في حيلَتِكَ.

Do not deceive me with Your cunning.

The Meaning of God's Cunning and Punishment

The concept of divine discipline is well-established. It is believed that God may inflict punishment upon humanity. However, some interpretations suggest that God might also deceive or mislead humans in their endeavors. This deception is described as being particularly skillful or cunning.

Oh God, please do not inflict punishment upon me in Your rebuke! The plea is not for a complete absence of correction but a plea against harsh disciplinary action. This distinction is quite significant. Can it be that God disciplines humanity through severe punishment? After all, punishment itself implies a form of correction and warning.

Beyond simplistic notions of punishment, refinement aligns with the "straight path," achieving balance and moderation in actions and fostering attentiveness and awareness.

There is a crucial contrast between those who embody refinement and those who lack it. Individuals needing refinement stray from the optimal path, succumbing to extremes of excess or deficiency. They lack adaptability and situational awareness, failing to adjust their behavior to suit different settings and demands. They are unaware and ignorant of the station of their master and are not attentive. There appears to be a lack of awareness among them regarding the established principles governing servitude and lordship. A refined individual, however, possesses this knowledge and understanding. It is essential for a servant to cultivate refinement within the context of their service, as discourteous behavior is incompatible with proximity to the lord.[8]

In His great mercy for His servants, the Exalted God desires to grant those He chooses entry into His sacred presence. Through His attribute of mercy, He opens a path to the next world, allowing them to commune with Him. Indeed, He must refine them before they can attain such a status! Only after they have been refined can the relationship between servant and master be maintained based on servitude and lordship. The servant then becomes capable of standing on the path of supplication to the Lord and engaging in dialogue with Him. This is the privilege of a servant who possesses refinement. Those who lack this refinement may not be able to access the same level of connection and are considered a separate subject of discussion.

Refinement is significant, for Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) said: If you refine me, you must do so out of love; do not refine me through punishment! Refinement of one's conduct is paramount on the path toward spiritual advancement. A lack of civility constitutes a significant impediment to this progress. A single act of disobedience by a servant may trigger the outpouring of the Lord's generous light, humbling the servant stripped of all status and pretense.[9]

The Importance of Respect in Depicting God and in Prayer

Clear and respectful communication is fundamental to building trust and understanding. This involves presenting well-supported arguments and expressing your beliefs concisely and articulately. Theological discussions should be grounded in genuine faith, and authenticity is vital when conveying your

interpretation of the divine. For example, you could say: I aspire to live a life that honors you through good deeds, God. However, acts of self-sacrifice or seeking harsh punishments or suffering wouldn't be an appropriate expression of faith.

Suppose language functioned perfectly, revealing our expressions' underlying truths. In that case, it might become clear that those who constantly prioritize the needs of others over their own might be creating distance rather than fostering connection.

If one says: My Lord, You are beyond our comprehension! Even though I may not fully understand Your ways, I wholeheartedly submit to Your will. Punish me if that is Your command, but grant me what I desire: the ultimate union with Your essence and the annihilation of Your boundless love. Cast me into the depths of hell if that is Your wish, but do not deny us the solace of Your divine presence, the sweetness of Your love. We are prepared to endure any hardship or tribulation if it leads us closer to the radiant beauty of Your countenance. In response to our fervent plea, the Lord speaks with compassion: What are you saying, My servant? Do you desire punishment and misfortune? Prepare yourself, for I am ready to fulfill your requests.

A Story from Ayatollah Sayyid Jamal al-Din Gulpayigani on the Manners of Prayer

Ayatollah Sayyid Jamal al-Din Gulpayigani, may God have mercy on him, was a great scholar of Najaf, a Marja' taqlīd (source of emulation), and a man of great character, knowledge, and manners. He was also a man of spiritual journey and vigilance. He once told me: Once in the shrine of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, I grabbed the rings of his shrine and shook them, and said, 'Bring down any misfortune or calamity you want on me but grant me the favor I seek!' I was the first to enter the shrine in the frigid pre-dawn hours of winter. Deeply moved, I offered supplications to Imam Ali, earnestly entreating him to grant my request. I was willing to endure any hardship or misfortune if it meant achieving my desire.

Driven by desperation, he's willing to bargain, offering to endure any imaginable poverty to fulfill his desire. This could include unimaginable suffering - a mountain collapsing on him, his body being mutilated, poverty engulfing him, the loss of his entire family - essentially any calamity that befell prophets like Job (*Ayyūb*) and Jacob. He's prepared to face any fate as long as his wish is granted.

Ayatollah Gulpayigani continued: The roots of our poverty began to take hold. Money became scarce, and income ceased during my studies in Najaf for several months. Having exhausted all borrowing options, the situation became

dire. The rent became overdue, and the landlord, with no other recourse, evicted us. We were forced to relocate our belongings to a small room within the Kufa mosque, a significant distance – more than a furlong – from Najaf. This became our new living situation. We would travel to Najaf for classes and discussions each day before returning to our cramped quarters within the Kufa mosque.

Frustrated by the situation, my wife exclaimed a series of rhetorical questions, criticizing my actions and invoking our religious beliefs. She demanded to know if this was how a Muslim should behave and questioned the compatibility of my actions with our faith. Determined to find solace, I suggested we visit the shrine of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), where she could express her frustrations.

The scorching summer heat accompanied us from the Kufa mosque to Najaf. Exhausted, I rested on the cool stones of the courtyard while my wife entered the shrine to vent her feelings to Imam Ali. Unfortunately, exiting the shrine, she discovered her shoes had been stolen from the designated area. Visibly distressed, she emerged barefoot and lamented, questioning Imam Ali's perceived indifference and expressing concern about our predicament. While the current situation presented some challenges, it was not catastrophic. Only a minor disruption to our livelihood had occurred.

We read in the prayer of Kumayl that:

فَهَبنی [یا إلهی و سَیّدی و مَولایَ و رَبّی] صَبَرتُ علیٰ عذابِک، فکیفَ أصبِرُ علیٰ فِراقِکَ؟! و هَبنی صَبَرتُ علیٰ حَرِّ نارِک، فکیفَ أصبِرُ عَنِ النَّظَرِ إلیٰ کَرامَتِک؟![10]

Imam Ali, peace be upon him, expressed these thoughts, and we echo them: O God, paradise is for children! We should not seek paradise and its fleeting pleasures. Instead, let us aspire to perfection, spiritual seekers' ultimate goal. The fear of hellfire is reserved for those who remain distant from God. We have traversed the spiritual path and attained a level of maturity that grants us the privilege of beholding God face-to-face. We no longer harbor the fear of damnation. Our hearts yearn for the divine encounter, for the ultimate union with the Exalted God.

Ayatollah Gulpayigani continued this poignant anecdote: Poverty relentlessly tightened its grip, escalating to a point where I found myself clinging to the rings of the holy shrine, pleading to the Commander of the Faithful, 'O Imam Ali, my words were folly! I retracted my plea! We possess no resilience, none whatsoever! I was mistaken!'[11]

عذِّب بما شئت غيرَ البُعد[12]

Encountering an expression of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's fervent plea, "Impose any consequences you deem necessary, but please do not forsake me," one would realize that his words are not for us to mimic. Ibn al-Fāriḍ echoed this supplication from a position of spiritual attainment, where the notion of separation from God was unbearable. In this state, any punishment other than divine abandonment was willingly accepted. His acceptance signifies the transcendence of servitude, where bodily harm holds no meaning. If such a person were to utter this prayer, it would reflect their spiritual stature.

Account of the Trials Endured by His Eminence Ayatollah Sayyid Jamal al-Din Gulpayigani

On one occasion, I visited the late Ayatollah Sayyid Jamal. I frequented his company, meeting with him once or twice a week, and he would generously impart his wisdom upon us for an hour each time. He emphasized, above all, the importance of avoiding sin, stating, "The entirety of the spiritual journey and path to enlightenment hinges upon abstaining from sin."

The weather was oppressively hot, and many ailments and tribulations beset him. He endured two significant medical conditions, one affecting his prostate, which had necessitated a surgical procedure, resulting in the use of a catheter, and additionally, he battled heart disease. Furthermore, his age exceeded ninety years.

Amidst a sea of personal challenges and financial burdens, Ayatollah Gulpayigani exuded a sense of inner peace and joy. His countenance radiated contentment, even as he grappled with mounting debts, the medical expenses of an ailing son, and marital discord.

One day, as I approached his humble abode, I found him immersed in the recitation of the Sajjādiyya prayer. His voice resonated with a tremor of deep emotion. The sight of him, deeply moved by the divine verses, spoke volumes about his spiritual resilience. Upon my entrance, he greeted me with a warm smile and a gentle invitation, "Come and sit here!" His eyes sparkled with wisdom as he inquired, "Do you know something, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn?" I replied, "What is it, sir?" His response was sincere: "Observe me; I am filled with immense joy! One who lacks mysticism possesses neither this world nor the hereafter!"

Ayatollah Gulpayigani recognized that I was acutely aware of his struggles and sought to impart a great truth: "My happiness is rooted in my unwavering faith.[13]

Indeed, after an individual awakens to the spiritual path and embarks on a journey of self-discovery, they are inevitably faced with trials and tribulations. These challenges, however, are no longer perceived as acts of punishment or misfortune but rather as blessings bestowed upon them by the Divine Hand of Mercy.

Navigating the Crossroads of Spiritual Discipline: Types of Trials for Seekers of Truth

In pursuing spiritual enlightenment, seekers encounter trials and tribulations catalyzing their growth and refinement. These trials can be broadly categorized into two distinct types: Type one is discipline through Chastisement. It is akin to a metaphorical slap on the back of the head, a sharp awakening call to those who have strayed from the path or are teetering on the brink of error. It serves as a wake-up call, a reminder to re-align with the spiritual trajectory. Should inattentiveness resume, a discreet corrective nudge will serve as a timely prompt to refocus efforts.

Humans allow their horses and donkeys to roam free and even provide them with hay and oats for sustenance. However, the donkey often raises its head, eyeing the lush grass that belongs to others, and eagerly jumps into the forbidden territory. As soon as it does, its owner administers a sharp blow with a whip, sending the startled creature back to its designated grazing area. The donkey complies, returning to its designated patch of hay and oats. But its attention wanders again, impulsively leaping back into the neighboring grass, reveling in the forbidden pleasure. Once more, the whip descends, bringing the donkey back to its senses. This cycle of discipline through punishment, with the whip acting as a stern reminder, helps to instill in the donkey an awareness of its boundaries and the consequences of transgression.

Similarly, human beings are prone to succumb to the allure of pride, boasting of past achievements and perceived grandeur. They may recall their triumphs over others with pride, perhaps likening themselves to legendary figures such as Rostam and Afrasiab or highlighting their perceived superiority over peers. Yet, these fleeting moments of self-aggrandizement often blind individuals to their true nature and the limitations of their worldly accomplishments. Ultimately, these fleeting triumphs mean little in the vastness of existence. The real question we

must ask ourselves is: What are we doing in this world? Our true purpose lies not in self-glorification but in seeking spiritual enlightenment and a deeper connection to the divine.

Sometimes, a human may stray far from the path, wandering. They may be oblivious to the guidance that awaits them, so they are left to their own devices, with the reins of their destiny loose in their grasp. Just as an untamed horse might indulge in grazing and stumble into a hidden pit, where it falls prey to lurking dangers, so too can a human, lacking spiritual direction, stumble into the pitfalls of life. Though seemingly harsh, these trials are not acts of cruelty or punishment. They are relatively gentle nudges, like a parent's reprimand, intended to awaken the humans to their true purpose and set them back on the right path.

God, in His boundless compassion, watches over those who seek His guidance. When He sees a soul succumbing to arrogance, He intervenes with a gentle reminder. This disciplinary measure is not meant to inflict pain or suffering but to stir the soul from its slumber and awaken it to the reality of its situation.

God awakens you to stand in your position and know who you are! Know that you are a servant! This is a powerful reminder to step into your proper role and discover your purpose. Remember, we are all called to serve a greater good, moving beyond self-centered language that focuses on "I" or "we." True strength lies not in boasting but in humility. Consider a leader who is blinded by pride and relies solely on their judgment, disregarding the wisdom of others. Now, faced with unforeseen challenges, they are forced to seek help from someone seemingly less qualified. These circumstances highlight the irony of human nature. If someone truly needed a significant sum, say a hundred thousand tomans, they might readily ask for it. Yet, the same individual, gripped by pride, might balk at requesting a meager one penny when faced with a desperate situation. In its wisdom, the universe may orchestrate such humbling experiences to dismantle arrogance and ego. The once healthy and proud individual might be struck with a debilitating illness, robbing them of sleep and focus. The comfort of a cherished home could be shattered by a disruptive neighbor, causing constant anguish.

The second kind of discipline does not involve punishment. The gentle nudge, rather than a harsh reprimand, serves as a reminder to the individual. When a person's gaze wanders, a soft voice emanates from above, "My dear, why did you turn your gaze that way?" The person becomes aware and recognizes their error. This gentle reminder, far from being punitive, is infused with love and

compassion, prompting individuals to reflect upon their actions and seek guidance from the divine.

During the holy month of Ramadan, the angels echo this call throughout the night, a clarion call to awaken from heedlessness and approach the Divine: O wayward souls heed the call! The gates of divine grace stand open wide, welcoming your return. Our embrace is boundless, our forgiveness is readily bestowed, and our ears are attentive to your heartfelt pleas. Abandon the allure of fleeting desires and cast aside the veil of heedlessness that obscures your path. Come to us, embrace the light of forgiveness, and find solace in our determined mercy.[14]

Angels descend from the sky and ascend constantly from the beginning of the night of Friday until dawn, calling:

هَل مِن مُستَغفِرٍ؟ هَل مِن داعٍ؟ [15]

Is there anyone who seeks forgiveness? Is there anyone who calls upon God?

We will answer his prayer, accept his call, and not reject it! O disobedient people, come!

Indeed, such discipline is not characterized by punishment. Instead, it embodies kindness and compassion. This is indeed a blessing, for no servant can endure being disciplined through punishment. Who would dare implore, 'O God, discipline us through punishment'?

When discipline is not meted out through punishment, it is delivered with a gentle touch of kindness and compassion, guiding the individual in a subtle manner that remains almost invisible. This discipline, rooted in kindness, is a secret of the Shari'ah and the spiritual journey.

Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him), renowned for his spiritual insights, was well-versed in this delicate art. These principles were as clear as the sun shining brightly before him. This is why he was able to offer such a prayer, seeking guidance and discipline from God.

One of the Qur'an's miracles is the unique and exemplary etiquette that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his Ahl al-Bayt) establishes with God throughout its verses.[16]

لا إله إلاّ الله و سبحان الله.

There is no God but Allah, and Glory be to Allah.

This exceptional etiquette is solely the Prophet's domain. No one other than the Seal of the Prophets can embody this divinely inspired path and utter his invocations with such sincerity. Only those who attain the spiritual heights of Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) can fully comprehend and express the plea, 'O God, do not discipline me with Your punishment!'

إلٰهی لا تُؤَدِّبنی بعُقوبَتِکَ.

I am a mere servant, powerless and impoverished. How could You think of disciplining me through punishment? Could I possibly bear it? Do You intend to snatch away my child and slay him? Or raze my home to the ground? Or inflict upon me the calamities that befell Prophet Job? Or sever me from my son, like Prophet Jacob and his beloved Joseph? Even lesser afflictions can torment me beyond measure. A single mosquito's persistent buzzing can turn my night into a living hell, robbing me of sleep until dawn. With its relentless flitting and perching, a single fly drives me to frustration and despair. Where can I find and crush this pesky fly, only for it to escape my grasp? In the end, I am left feeling helpless and defeated.[17]

The Imam declares, "We cannot bear the burden!" Indeed, it is so, O God, we are Your humble servants, utterly dependent on Your grace. All that we possess belongs to You; we hold nothing for ourselves. We cannot secure our well-being or acquire what we lack. While our worldly circumstances may appear favorable, our true yearning lies with the hereafter. Our lives may be blessed, yet forgiveness remains paramount. Material success, whether in commerce or enterprise, cannot supplant our longing for the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In truth, we possess nothing of lasting value. Should one proclaim, "O God, all praise is due to You, my worldly affairs are prosperous, grant me the hereafter," they speak a great truth.

No matter how much we deny, we always need God. The delay of even a single drop of water can elicit a resounding lament from a human being; the lament is as loud as the disappointment caused by the late arrival of that precious drop.

Can a human genuinely claim that worldly pursuits are insignificant? Can we assert that we do not require water or oxygen to sustain our lives? We are utterly dependent on God for these fundamental necessities. Every breath we take is a testament to His boundless generosity and our inherent need for His sustenance.

Consider the agonizing experience of having our breath obstructed, even for a fleeting moment. The sensation is akin to being suffocated, leaving us in a state of utter desperation.

The Tale of Hajj Hadi Abhari and the Self-Important Gendarmerie

Hajj Hadi Abari recounted, "I once embarked on a journey to Qazwīn, and as cars were scarce from our town [Abhar] – many years ago – I boarded a cargo truck to reach Qazwīn. A gendarmerie, one of those security personnel, sat beside me. At the intersection of Karaj, the truck overturned into the river, trapping us beneath its wreckage, with our airways obstructed. Had rescue not arrived within seconds, we would have perished then and there! I survived, though I could hear the gendarme beside me repeatedly cry, 'I am a gendarme! I am a gendarme! Save me!' My internal dialogue echoed, 'Yes, you are a gendarme, but your authority is meaningless here!'

Hajj Hadi emphasized, 'This insignificant breeze when a person endures such distress, realizes its value! This breeze! A mere gust of wind can revive the deceased; without it, they remain lifeless.

Thus, we rely on even the gentlest breezes, a mere breath of air!

إلهی لا تُؤَدِّبنی بِعُقُوبَتِک.
و لا تَمکُر بی فی حیلَتِک.

'*Ḥīla*, حیلة' signifies astuteness, keen perception, and mental acuity. When one is said to be 'cunning' in a particular endeavor, the primary connotation of 'guile' is that they sharpen their observational skills and employ their intellect to discern the essence of the matter with precision and ingenuity.

O God! In the stratagem that You employ with me (i.e., the insightfulness and astuteness You possess in matters concerning me and the sharpness of Your understanding in my affairs), do not deceive me!

Deception in the context of God's actions refers to the consequences of human deceit. When individuals attempt to deceive God, their actions ultimately backfire, causing harm to themselves rather than to God. Because man is not outside God's rule, he cannot have the power or knowledge to devise a plan to defeat God and His will. This is because, no matter how much man deceives, he is still within God's governance.

To deceive God means to try to trick Him and to take precedence over His command. This is impossible and a sign of man's ignorance and foolishness. This

ignorance will eventually harm the man himself. Therefore, anyone who tries to deceive God is deceiving himself.

God does not deceive anyone. He allows the consequences of our deception to come back to us. If we know our deception, we can repent and change our ways. But if we are unaware, we will continue to deceive ourselves and others and eventually suffer the consequences.

The mouse is no match for the cat in a confrontation, so the cat toys with it instead. The cat sits calmly, observing, and occasionally even closes its eyes to gauge the mouse's movements. Meanwhile, the mouse, unaware of the cat's cunning, makes futile attempts to deceive and escape. The mouse remains motionless, plotting its escape, until the opportune moment arrives. It believes it has outsmarted the cat, but with its sharp eyes and instincts, it is always one step ahead. With a swift leap, the cat snatches the mouse, leaving it no chance to flee. The cat repeatedly engages in this playful dance with the mouse, teasing and tormenting it before reclaiming its prey. The mouse, trapped in its self-deception, fails to grasp the cat's dominance and falls prey to its predator's whims. The mouse dithers, constantly fluctuating and changing its mind.

Oh God! We recognize that all affairs lie in Your hands; why should a man toy with God? When we perceive that all possibilities stem from You and none but You, why do we persist in testing God?

We inherently struggle to understand God's will and actions, sometimes leading us to question or challenge Him. We test Him thousands of times daily to ascertain His veracity! We trust Him to discern if anything exists beyond reliance. We entrust our affairs to God and observe their unfolding to determine whether they manifest. All of these actions are tests! He possesses a genuinely noble and forgiving character! God's generosity is immense, for even though we constantly test His patience, He remains so generous that He refrains from rebuke, instead saying: 'Oh servant, do you think you are testing Me? I am the one testing you!'

God is like a parent who forgives his children even when they disobey or disrespect him. We consistently attempt to deceive God, carrying out deeds surreptitiously while believing they are insignificant, assuming He will not comprehend our actions. Repeatedly executed actions are not concealed from God's scrutinizing gaze. He is Omniscient, the Knower of all that is seen and unseen.

عالم الغيب والشهادة.[18]

He dominates all affairs, coordinating the world's events according to His ultimate design. Should He deem it merciful, He may employ discipline, even if it manifests as punishment, to foster our rectification. Such corrective measures, derived from His wisdom, are preferable to leaving us unreformed and prone to straying further into the depths of moral depravity.

The Meaning of Istidrāj

Istidrāj refers to a situation where someone is seemingly granted favors or experiences a period of ease despite potentially wrong actions. This can lead to complacency and a gradual decline in religious commitment or good deeds, often without the person realizing it. A man utters a self-directed murmur that conveys contentment with his well-being, including physical health, emotional state, material possessions, and spiritual fulfillment. He arrogantly declares, "Who is better than me?" However, he remains oblivious to the impending turn of events. While a sudden and forceful push to the bottom would undoubtedly cause shock, a gradual descent allows the person to remain unaware of their decline. This subtler method, known as Istidrāj, is considered the most severe punishment, as it deceives the victim into a false sense of security. The Exalted God is merciful. He will try to make a deceived person aware of his situation. However, if the person persists in deception, God will allow him to continue. In this case, the person's deception of God will return to the person himself.

ومكروا ومكر الله والله خير الماكرين.[19]

Humans and their adversaries engage in deceptive schemes, yet God also employs His cunning strategies, albeit with a thoughtful reservoir of mercy and divine sanction.

God's strategic maneuvers differ drastically from our own. He masterfully turns our deceitful plots back upon us, exposing the irrationality of our misguided intentions. When individuals seek to deceive God, they deceive themselves, plunging into a self-imposed snare. In essence, human deception against God is an act of self-deception, a perverse attempt to elevate one's flawed judgment above the divine wisdom of the Exalted God.

يخادعون الله وهو خادعهم.[20]

They aspire to outwit and deceive God yet remain oblivious that God is planning His deception.

The very act of deception these people attempt to commit against God is ultimately a deception that God is committing against them.[21] They believe they can do something that God will not understand, but they fail to realize that their ignorance and blindness are blinding them to the true nature of their actions.

The partridge that seeks refuge from the hunter's gaze in the depths of winter plunges its head into the snow, believing it to be a shield against detection. However, the unfortunate creature fails to grasp that its misguided attempt to conceal itself inadvertently renders it more visible to the hunter, who swiftly seizes upon this unsuspecting target. To evade the hunter's grasp, the partridge must submerge its entire body beneath the snow, exposing its vigilant gaze to the surroundings. Concentrating on the hunter's movements from this protected vantage point is a far more effective strategy than burying its head in the snow. This self-imposed blindness fails to conceal the partridge's location from the hunter's keen eyes. In its misguided attempt to remain undetected, the partridge unwittingly surrenders itself to the hunter's grasp.

Hạḍrat says: Oh Lord, with your immense wisdom, your all-seeing gaze, and your perfect control over my destiny, I implore you not to mislead me with illusions! I, your humble and ignorant servant, confess to being the one who deceives myself. Forgive me, and do not return my deception upon me. If you were to do so, it would be a calamity of the highest order!

However, if you forgive me and grant me awareness of your infinite generosity, even with discipline or punishment, it would be far better than being deceived. To be deceived is to be given free rein, unaware of my self-deception. If you were to return my deception upon me, I would wander through life in blindness, forever lost, unable to comprehend my origins or the value of my actions. I would believe myself doing good and living purposefully while remaining oblivious to my ultimate destination. I think this is the greatest deception God can inflict upon humanity.

Occasionally, an individual seeks to deceive God, and God swiftly confronts the individual: Abstain from attempting to mislead me! The individual responds: I apologize; I shall not repeat this transgression! Nonetheless, on certain occasions, an individual attempts to beguile God while God feigns incomprehension. The individual exclaims: Astounding! Is this truly your perception? The individual is attempting to deceive God, yet they are portraying their actions as tokens of love

and devotion, which God is accepting as such. This is the reason the individual will endure suffering.

Suppose God highlights to the individual the presence of an error in their conduct, indicating that some of it was hypocritical, fame-seeking, arrogant, or imbued with a hint of duality or deception. In that case, the individual will become aware of their actions. However, if God refrains from pointing this out to the individual, they will remain oblivious and repeatedly engage in the same behaviors. They will continue to amass knowledge, power, wealth, life, and dignity, accumulating the very elements that will lead them to hell while being entirely unaware of their journey towards damnation. This is deception compounded upon deception.

مِن أينَ لِیَ الخَیرُ یا رَبِّ، و لا یُوجَدُ إلاّ مِن عندک.

O my Lord, how can I attain goodness, for it is only found in Your presence?

و مِن أینَ لِیَ النَّجاةُ، و لا تُستَطاعُ إلاّ بِک.

And from where is salvation for me, O Lord, and it is impossible except by You.

True salvation and deliverance are unattainable without Your divine intervention. Our feeble efforts are futile without Your grace and mercy

If goodness, salvation, happiness, and prosperity were accessible from multiple sources, we would resort to trickery and deceit to obtain them from others, disregarding Your sovereignty. We would mindlessly pursue these fleeting pleasures, oblivious to the trap of deception that awaits. But the reality is that all goodness, salvation, and deliverance emanate from You alone. Yours is the ultimate source of fulfillment and the key to our spiritual liberation.

و لا یُمکِنُ الفِرارُ مِن حُکومَتِک![22]

In the face of Your inescapable dominion, where else could I find goodness, O my Lord? You are my Lord, my Sovereign! I cannot seek goodness, for it exists nowhere but in Your presence. Salvation and deliverance are unattainable without Your divine decree, emerging solely from the boundless expanse of Your power.

لا الّذی أحسَنَ استَغنیٰ عن عَونِکَ و رحمَتِک.

The one who does good is not independent of Your help and mercy.

No act of good is done without Your mercy, nor is any sinner beyond Your reach. Those who perform good deeds do so with the capacity You have granted them, yet they remain dependent on Your mercy and guidance in their righteous actions.

و لا الذی أساء و اجترأ علیک و لم یرضک خرج عن سلطانک .

Even those who commit evil and shameful acts defy your will, break free from the bonds of service, and displease you but remain subject to Your ultimate authority.

If man could escape divine dominion and engage in wickedness without consequence, what a fortunate state he would be in! For then, his actions would be entirely beyond the Lord's governance, and God would be powerless to intervene in his sin-soaked realm. But alas, this is not the case. Even in the depths of man's transgression, the Lord's kingdom and power remain ever-present. His omnipresence encompasses all, even the darkest corners of man's moral depravity.[23]

Intrinsically limited, the humble servant, even when virtuous, cannot attribute goodness to himself. He relies on God's assistance and benevolence, for he lacks existential sovereignty to engender mercy from within. Instead, God's munificence infuses his existence, enabling him to perform well through his actions. Yet, even while committing an infraction, an individual is not self-reliant but remains subject to God's dominion.

یا رب! یا رب! یا رب! یا رب! یا رب!

Ḥadrat said, "O my God! O my God! O my God!" (He said it so many times that he ran out of breath).

How many times can a person say, "O Lord!" in one breath?

The Meaning of "Ya Rab" (O my God)

"Ya Rab" means that You are, and that is all! You are my Lord in kindness! You are my Lord, in help! You are my Lord in mercy! You are my Lord when I am daring and offending! You are my Lord when I am deceiving You and thinking I can escape from Your command, but it is not so! You are my Lord!

والله غالب على أمره ولكن أكثر الناس لا يعلمون. [24]

God does His work. You are my Lord, and I acknowledge it. You are my God, Lord, responsible for all my aspects!

بک عرفتک، و انت دللتنی علیک و دعوتنی إلیک، و لولا أنت لم أدر ما أنت.

Oh, my Lord! I have come to know You through Your Essence and am fully aware of who You are. It was You who guided me to Yourself, not through any intermediaries or external sources. I did not recognize You through any extraneous means, for such attempts only would serve as veils and barriers between me and Your Divine Presence. Instead, You took my hand in Your boundless grace and

revealed Yourself to me. You extended Your invitation, beckoning me to the realm of Your radiant light. Without Your divine intervention, I would have remained oblivious to Your boundless essence. Through this realization, I have understood that You, my Lord, are the sole source of all existence.

We shall explore how God unveils Himself to humanity. The task remains complete once a direct encounter with the Lord is achieved. Humans invariably interpose veils and intermediaries between themselves and the Divine Presence, albeit independently. However, when an individual apprehends God directly, as one perceives the sun in its entirety, unmediated by the interplay of light and darkness, they can genuinely acknowledge their subjection to the Divine Will. They recognize that every action and conduct is under the watchful gaze of the Exalted God and that supplication to Him is an indispensable aspect of all endeavors.

وَ لِكُلِّ طَاعَةٍ وَ مَعْصِيَةٍ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ.[25]

And for every act of obedience and disobedience, there is no power or strength except in God, the Exalted, the Great.

اللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ.

O God, send peace and blessings upon Muhammad and his family.

أعوذُ باللهِ مِنَ الشَّيطانِ الرَّجيم
بسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمنِ الرَّحيم
و صلّى اللهُ على محمّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرين
و لَعنةُ اللهِ على أعدائهم أجمَعين .
بِكَ عَرَفتُكَ، و أنتَ دَلَلتَنی علیکَ، و دَعَوتَنی إلیکَ، و لولا أنتَ لم أدرِ ما أنتَ.

O God, I have known You by Yourself, and You have guided me to Yourself, and You have called me to Yourself, and if You were not, I would not have known who You are.

The sentence " بِكَ عَرَفتُكَ, I have known You by You" completes the meaning; the sentences after, "And You guided me to You, and You called me to You, and if it were not for You, I would not have known what You are," are like interpretation, explanation, and commentary of the same sentence "I have known You by You."

Knowledge acquisition is fundamentally predicated upon a connection between two fundamental entities: the object of knowledge and the cognizing agent or the knower.[26] Whether direct or indirect, this connection is the foundation of knowledge.

In instances of direct knowledge, the cognizing agent establishes a firsthand, sensory-based interaction with the object of knowledge. For example, observing a physical object with one's eyes or directly experiencing a phenomenon through one's senses exemplifies direct knowledge acquisition. Conversely, indirect knowledge acquisition occurs when the cognizing agent gains knowledge through a mediated or inferential process. This may involve learning about an object from another individual, interpreting information presented in books or other sources, or deducing knowledge from a set of premises. For example, observing someone does not establish a connection with another person, even if the second person resides in a separate geographical location. This absence of a connection encompasses associations, partnerships, familial ties (paternity, filiation, kinship), or any causal relationship.

Knowledge is always derived from a connection between two things.

For a person to know something, there must be a causal or consequential relationship between the knower and the known. Inferential reasoning based on causality can be used to see the existence of something from the existence of its cause. For example, when people see fire, they can infer that there is heat because fire cannot exist without heat. This is called "inferring the effect from the cause,"

in the language of scholars and literati, it is called "Burhān-i lam." Deductive reasoning from cause to effect is called "Burhān-i lam."

Explanation of "Burhān-i In" in Knowledge and the Relationship Between Two Things

Modus ponens or affirming the consequent is deductive reasoning that uses a conditional statement to conclude. In this case, the conclusion is that the resultant is true when the antecedent is true.

Sometimes, a person sees an effect and realizes that there is a cause. For example, if a person sees smoke rising from behind a wall, they can infer that there is a fire on the other side. This is the opposite of the first example. In the first example, the person saw fire and inferred that there was heat. In this example, the person does not visualize the fire directly but sees smoke and infers that there is fire. This is because smoke cannot exist without fire. Therefore, smoke indicates that something must have caused it to exist.

Exposition of " Burhān-i Māfawq-i Lamm" in Knowledge and the Relationship Between Two Things

"Burhān-i Māfawq-i Lamm" is deductive reasoning beyond the causal relationship between two things. It can infer the existence of something that is not directly observable.

In this type of reasoning, the observer starts with a general principle or law of nature. They then use that principle or law to infer the existence of something that is not directly observable. For example, a person might use "Burhān-i Māfawq-i Lamm" to assume the existence of God. The proponent would likely adhere to the philosophical principle of causality, which states that everything that exists must have a cause. By applying this principle, they would argue that the universe, demonstrably having a beginning, necessitates a cause. Consequently, they would conclude that this causal agent is God.

"Burhān-i Māfawq-i Lamm" is a powerful tool for making inferences about the world. It can infer the existence of things that are not directly observable, such as God, the soul, and the afterlife.

Sometimes, a person neither infers the effect from the cause nor the cause from the effect. Instead, they see and understand something for themselves. For example, if a person is brought a fire, they are close enough to the fire to see it and feel its heat and the smoke. Here, the person has not inferred the effect from the cause or the cause from the effect. They knew the thing for themselves. This is called "Burhān-i fawq-i Lamm."

The Logical Cogency of Burhān-i Inni and its Argument for the Existence of God

Burhān-i Inni (إنّ), a form of deductive reasoning, posits that the presence of an effect necessitates the existence of a corresponding cause. This principle, deeply rooted in logic and observation, serves as the foundation for a compelling argument for the existence of God.

Our world abounds with intricate and diverse effects, including time, earth, creation, wind, rain, clouds, earthquakes, lightning, and the ceaseless transformations of the terrestrial and celestial realms. In their sheer abundance and complexity, these phenomena are irrefutable evidence of a supreme cause, the essence of Godhood.

The presence of a building inevitably points to the existence of an architect. Wherever you go, whether in a bustling city, tranquil countryside, or a quaint village, the sight of a structure instantly prompts the conclusion that it was conceived and constructed by a skilled builder. This intuitive leap from the visible effect to its underlying cause is a testament to our ingrained understanding of causality.

Consider the carpet beneath your feet. Upon observing its intricate patterns and delicate weave, you instinctively recognize the handiwork of a skilled artisan. The same holds for cooked food. The aroma wafting from a freshly baked dish, the sizzling sound of a pan, and the sight of steaming plates all point to the culinary expertise of a chef. Likewise, the polished door that greets you at the entrance of a building, the intricately carved stone adorning the mosque's facade, and the meticulously crafted furniture in your home all bear the unmistakable imprint of human craftsmanship. These tangible creations speak volumes about the ingenuity and artistry of their makers.

The Quality of Agnostic Knowledge in the Hadith of the Arab; the essence of inductive reasoning – inferring the cause from the effect

An Arab came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), and he argued for the oneness of God and that God created the heavens and the earth. His argument was as follows:

البَعرَةُ تَدُلُّ على البَعيرِ، و أثرُ الأقدامِ يدُلُّ على المَسيرِ؛ أ فَسماءٌ ذاتُ أبراجٍ و أرضٌ ذاتُ فِجاجٍ لا تَدُلّانِ على اللّطيفِ الخبيرِ؟[27]

The droppings of a camel indicate the presence of a camel, and the footprints indicate the path. So, do the heavens with their constellations and the earth with its vast expanses not indicate the All-Meticulous, the All-Aware?

As I traverse a trail and encounter camel dung, I conclude that a camel has traversed this path. As I continue along the route, encountering human footprints, I deduce that a human has passed by here. Therefore, should not this sky, with its lofty grandeur and celestial structures, and this earth, with its fissures and markings, manifest the existence of an Omniscient and All-Aware Creator who fashioned these wonders?

An older adult, one of those skilled artisans who spun wool and cotton on her spinning wheel, was asked: How did you come to know your God? She replied: All I know is that placing this wool and cotton on the wheel turns it into thread. But the moment I remove my hand, the wheel ceases to move, and the transformation halts. The wool and cotton remain static, incapable of becoming thread. Hence, if the removal of my hand causes the wheel to stop, and the movement of this wheel is initiated by my hand, then the movement of this grand celestial wheel must be undertaken by God! The expanse of the sky and the earth and this continued rotation must have an originator who keeps them in motion. Without this rotator, the cosmos would cease to turn and stand still.

از آن چرخه که گرداند زن پیر　　　قیاس چرخ گردنده همان گیر.[28]

The old woman's wheel, a ceaseless spin,
A metaphor for life, the endless grind.

و عَلیکُم بِدینِ العَجائِز..

And upon you is the religion of the elderly.

This signifies that the religious beliefs of elderly women, which are rooted in the process of inferring causes from effects, should not be disregarded. At the very least, you should hold onto this notion of seeking knowledge of God.

The exploration of the visible world, the domain of nature, is the foundation of the faith of wise elders who seek knowledge of God by observing the intricate designs and patterns in the natural world. This exploration involves venturing into nature's diverse landscapes, from flower-filled meadows to cascading waterfalls, and immersing oneself in its beauty and complexity. Through careful observation and contemplation, one discerns the intelligence and artistry behind this extraordinary creation. The sheer precision and intricate harmony of nature's wonders point to the existence of a Creator of immense power and wisdom.

Most of those who have come to recognize God's existence have done so through this path of observation and inference. From theists and philosophers to sages and wise individuals, their understanding of God has been cultivated by

witnessing the wonders of nature and deducing the existence of a Creator who could have masterminded such intricate and awe-inspiring designs. Exploring the visible world, guided by the Quran's invitation to 'take this path,' offers an insightful approach to comprehending God's existence. This journey involves observing the intricate designs and patterns that permeate the natural world, allowing one to deduce the existence of a Creator who orchestrates such intricate and awe-inspiring creations.

While exploring the visible world offers valuable insights into the natural world and its Creator, it is essential to recognize its limitations. This path may only reveal one aspect of the cause, potentially obscuring other essential dimensions.

Observing smoke from a distance can lead to the conclusion that fire is present, but this does not equate to comprehending the essence of fire. Has the observer experienced the fire's warmth, witnessed its vibrant flames, or grasped its intricate mechanisms? The answer to these questions remains elusive. The person merely acknowledges the presence of smoke, establishing a general inference about its cause. In contrast, someone who stands directly before the fire gains a far deeper understanding. They can perceive the fire's scorching heat, inhale the pungent smoke, and even feel the flames' intensity. This intimate connection with fire provides a comprehensive understanding that surpasses mere observation from afar.

The knowledge of all beings of God is from behind the veil and from afar

All beings know God but know Him from afar; they perceive Him from behind the veil, and no one can deny it.

افی الله شک فاطر السموت و الارض.[29]

Can there be doubt about God, the originator of the heavens and the earth?

Examining an event's consequences can provide clues to its cause. However, this understanding may be limited by the nature of the result itself. In other words, the cause brings about the effect, and the effect reflects the cause only to the degree that it exists. If the effect could fully represent the cause, it wouldn't be an effect but rather the cause itself.

A master painter who paints paintings, no matter which of his paintings you watch, shows you that the painter is within the limits of this painting, not the truth of the painter! The artist is capable of creating even more outlandish and enigmatic works. Therefore, observing this painting alone does not give insight into the

artist's essence. Instead, within the confines of this frame, you can appreciate the artist's boundless creativity and dedication, not merely a single representation.!

در فریب نقش نتوان خامه‌ی نقّاش دید   ورنه در این سقف زنگاری یکی در کار هست.[30]

The painted world, a perfect snare,
No trace of brush, no artist there.
The eye believes the senses trust,
In fields of green and skies of dust.
But wait, a glint, a hint of rust,
The weathered ceiling gathers dust.
A single stroke, a tell-tale sign,
Those hidden hands, this world define.

The Limited Perception of the Painter's Essence

Humans cannot fully grasp the unifying essence of the painter solely from the paintings they observe. While we may admire individual works, we remain oblivious to the underlying unity that drives the artist's creation. The painter's knowledge, skill, and creative power converge within the confines of their being, yet these qualities remain imperceptible within the realm of the painting. The artwork strives to manifest this unity, offering a window into the very core of the artist's being.

The Finite Perspective of Cause and Effect

In this realm, when an individual gains knowledge of an effect, they correspondingly come to understand the cause. However, this knowledge is invariably confined to a limited vantage point, a specific perspective, and a narrow frame of reference. This is akin to viewing a photograph of an individual from an oblique angle. The observer perceives one side of the subject's face, yet the other remains hidden. Similarly, when we grasp the effect, we only glimpse a fragment of the cause. We cannot perceive the cause from all angles and perspectives.

Looking beyond the immediate effects and identifying the underlying causes is essential to gain a proper understanding. Focusing solely on the effects provides a limited perspective and hinders a comprehensive analysis.

The Importance of Knowing the Causes

روستایی گاو در آخُر ببست   شیر ، گاوش خورد ، بر جایش نشست.[31]

In a rural setting, a villager secures his bovine within an enclosure. A large feline predator enters the stable and consumes the cow, subsequently taking its place.

Unaware of this turn of events, the villager arrives at the stable during nighttime to tend to the cow. Believing it to be bovine, the villager massages and provides water to the predator, even touching its head, paws, and tail. Upon the horrifying realization that he is interacting with a lion, the villager becomes overwhelmed with fear and cries for help from a safe distance.

This story illustrates the importance of knowing the causes of things. The villager only sees the effect of the cow being gone, but he does not know the cause. When he realizes the cause, he is shocked and afraid.

گفت شیر ار روشنی افزون شدی   زهره اش بدریدی و دل ، خون شدی.[32]

When observing a distant phenomenon in the darkness of night, humans often infer a cause from its effect. This leads to attributing characteristics, names, and dominance hierarchies to a divine being. However, these are all merely anthropomorphic projections, entities observed "calling from a distant place" (أُولَـٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ).[33]

The Incomplete and Constrained Nature of Effect-Based Knowledge

Acquiring knowledge of God solely through observing His effects is inherently limited and one-dimensional. This is because the effect represents only a fraction of God's multifaceted essence. The knowledge of God through the effect is incomplete and inadequate. It is a partial and superficial understanding of God suitable for old women.

In Surah Al-A'raf, verse 143, the Quran recounts a dialogue between God and Moses. When Moses expresses his desire to see God directly, he receives the divine response: "You will not be able to see Me" (لن تَرانی - lan Tarani).

چه کردی فهم از دین العجائز   که بر خود جهل میداری تو جائز
برون آی از سرای ام هانی   بخوان مجمل حدیث لن ترانی.[34]

Blind faith you follow, twisted, incomplete,
The wisdom of the elders, a tainted treat.
Ignorance a cloak you wear with ease,
But truth demands a soul that seeks and sees.
From shadows step, from Umm Hani's hold,
Let open light your understanding unfold.
The sacred words "Lan Tarani" ring true,
God's essence is veiled, forever from mortal view.

Undoubtedly, that Arab man's knowledge was confined to his level, which is commendable! It stands a thousand degrees above polytheism yet falls woefully short of absolute faith, which entails direct perception and the state of union with the divine.

The legislator expects only some individuals to attain the pinnacle of absolute knowledge. Instead, each person is encouraged to pursue a level of understanding within their reach. While deductive reasoning from effects to their causes is a valid method of acquiring knowledge, it is crucial to avoid relying solely on superficial understandings. We must not be content with the "religion of the old woman," which is superficial.

Imam Sajjad's Proclamation of Divine Knowledge

In the depths of his spiritual communion, Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) eloquently declared, "O God, I have known You through none but Yourself.

بِکَ عَرَفتُکَ.

I have not sought to grasp Your essence from the created realm, be it the towering mountains, the vast expanse of the sky, the cataclysmic earthquakes, the intricate design of fate, the unyielding decrees of destiny, the elusiveness of unfulfilled aspirations, the erratic winds, or the majestic ships navigating the currents of the sea.

فَسخِ العَزائمِ و نَقضِ الهِمَمِ.[35]

No, I have arrived at the immense knowledge of Your being through Your self-disclosure, and through this intimate connection, You have also granted me the privilege of knowing Yourself. O God, You have guided and called me to Yourself. I would not have known who You are if it were not for You.

Divine Presence Pervasive: Unveiling the Eyes of the Soul

The statement "I have known You by You" captures the essence of actual knowledge, often called "Ḥaqqu'l-Ma'rifah." This knowledge is inherent and immediate. From the moment of my awakening, a natural inclination guided me to perceive the existence of a Creator. In that initial glance, my focus settled solely upon You. Unmediated, I witnessed Your grandeur, a pervasive presence transcending any physical form.

أنتَ شاهدٌ لی و مَشهودٌ.[36]

You are my witness and the One who witnessed.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) declares that:

و رأيتُک فی کلِّ شَیء،[37] و لا يَخلو منکَ شَیء،[38] ما رأيتُ شَيئًا إلاّ و رأيتُ اللهَ قَبلَهُ و بَعدَهُ و مَعَهُ.[39]

"I saw You in everything," "Nothing is devoid of You," and "I did not see anything except that I saw God before it, after it, and with it."

This perspective prioritizes the recognition of divine agency. Upon encountering creation, one perceives the handiwork of God as the primary reality. In other words, created objects express God's power and creativity. Consequently, the existence of God is considered more evident than the existence of any created thing. This follows from the fundamental distinction between creator and creation. Created things are contingent upon the creator for their existence. Therefore, the creator is always more readily apprehended than the creation itself. From this vantage point, the cause (God) is necessarily more manifest in the existence of the effect (creation) than the effect is in itself.

This proposition asserts that the universe and all it contains originated from a divine creative act. It posits the existence of a preeminent entity, a First Cause, responsible for initiating the existence of each element within the cosmos. Consequently, all created things inherently rely upon this divine source, and their existence would be entirely contingent upon it.

How can humanity then employ a created entity as a reflective tool for comprehending divinity? Such an endeavor is inherently illogical and futile. For the moment we set a creature before us, we simultaneously posit the very existence of God, for it is impossible for the effect to exist without its cause. The very known question that we invoke to illuminate the unknown lies within the depths of this known question, and if we scrutinize this known with proper insight, we shall uncover the very unknown we seek.

The interconnectedness between God and creation renders any notion of separation utterly inconceivable. This bond is so intensely manifested within every aspect of existence that its brilliance blinds our finite perception. This paradoxical effect – the very intensity of God's manifestation obscuring our comprehension – stems from the boundless radiance that permeates all beings. Beyond this divine effulgence, nothing exists but God alone. Therefore, which elements of creation, manifestations of the divine, and which creatures can lead us toward a deeper

understanding of God? The act of observing creation is an act of encountering God's handiwork.

If we strip the effect of its original existence and the manifestation of God's light, it becomes mere nothingness. The very fact that we can perceive the effect is due to the light of God that permeates it. Therefore, our initial gaze falls upon God, the source of all existence. With this understanding, how can we ponder God's existence through the effect?

Interpretation of some passages from the end of the supplication of Arafa

Ḥaḍrat sayyid al-Shuhada (peace be upon him), at the end of the supplication of Arafa that is attributed to him, says:[40]

كَيْفَ يُسْتَدَلُّ عَلَيْكَ بِما هُوَ فى وُجودِهِ مُفْتَقِرٌ إِلَيْكَ؟![41]

How can one infer your existence from something that needs you?

Does this effect not aspire to reveal God? An introducer must exist first before the process of definition and introduction can commence. However, the existence of this effect hinges on Yours! Before introduction, it is inextricably linked to your existence, indebted to you for its very existence. From you, it draws its life force, aspiring to exist. With our limited perception, how can we observe this effect in isolation and demand that it serves as a guide toward God?

The concept of 'you' is not self-existent; it is contingent upon the existence of God. When we utter, 'Come,' we acknowledge the existence of the 'you,' but the very act of asserting the 'you' presupposes the prior existence of God. In essence, God's existence precedes that of all pronouns, including 'I' and all other pronouns used by diverse linguistic groups. This is a great observation that underscores the primacy of God's existence.

The boundless presence of the divine essence permeates all existence, enveloping every being long before your hand reaches out to touch them. God's pervasiveness intertwines with the very fabric of creation, rendering the notion of separation a mere illusion. The divine essence is not simply a distant entity but rather an intimate presence that permeates the cosmos, enlivening every particle and every soul.[42]

The presence of the essence of Ḥaqq (God, the truth) in the heart of everything

داخلٌ فى الأشياءِ لا بالمُمازَجةِ و خارجٌ عنها لا بالمُزايَلةِ.[43]

Inside of things, not by mixing, and outside of them, not by separation.

Given the boundless expanse of existence, what consequence, being, entity, object, material conception, or figment of imagination can man identify as distinct so that he can proclaim, "For the sake of God, guide me to Him?"

Even the tiniest gnat, if it were to undertake the task of introducing you to God, or even the most insignificant speck of straw if it were to embark on the journey of guiding you towards the Divine, would nonetheless be in a position to convey the essence of God to you. In their fundamental existence, the gnat and the speck of straw are intrinsically connected to God by their inherent necessity.

As soon as you touch that speck of straw, God's essence will manifest, transcending the limitations of the material world. Having served its purpose as a vessel for divine revelation, the speck of straw will swiftly fade into oblivion, and its existence will become rendered inconsequential in the presence of the Supreme Being.

كَيفَ يُستَدَلُّ عَلَيكَ بِما هوَ فى وُجودِهِ مُفتَقِرٌ إلَيكَ؟! أ يَكونُ لِغَيرِكَ مِنَ الظُّهورِ ما لَيسَ لَكَ حَتّى يَكونَ هوَ المُظهِرَ لَكَ؟[44]

Does something else have a manifestation that You do not have so that it can be the one that manifests You?

We grasp a candle and traverse the inky night. We venture into any dark domain, and by the grace and radiance of this candle's light, we locate our lost possessions in that obscurity and retrieve them. When lost in the darkness, objects are indistinguishable, light must emerge to separate things, and humanity must claim its desired item amidst all that exists! Therefore, light is essential to differentiation, allowing us to claim what we seek within the vast array of possibilities.

What man strives to discover is an entity that illuminates our candle or flashlight. The entity possesses such extraordinary luminescence that it has activated numerous light sources, including ours, throughout the vast expanse of the cosmos. Our thoughts and imagination—they, too, are lights. Armed with these, we seek God's presence.

Created beings and their effects are not self-manifesting in the sense of being independent of God's manifestation. Consequently, we cannot employ these manifestations to seek the Unmanifest. The premise is that this manifestation is a mere fraction of the manifestations of His sacred essence, similar to how we grasp

a lantern or candle and seek the sun with it. On a radiant day, the sun illuminates the entire earth and time in its celestial expanse. Naturally, the candle in our hand also derives its illumination from the ultimate source, not an independent cause! By this light, can we hope to locate the sun? Is it plausible?

بسی نادان که او خورشید تابان   به نور شمع جوید در بیابان.[45]

Beneath the sun's unflinching gaze, a warmth that fills the sky,
A wanderer seeks a flickering flame, a reason to deny.
The brilliance freely offered a truth that filled the air,
For solace in a candle's glow, a burden he will bear.

An Allegory of Seekers of Cursory Knowledge

How many ignorant people search for the shining sun in the middle of the desert with the light of a candle? They strike a match, light the candle, and in the middle of the day, they say, "Sir, let's go for a walk. We want to go find the sun!"

علم چون بر فرازد شاه فرخار   چراغ آنجا نماید چون شب تار.[46]

Where banners bright of knowledge rise unfurled,
A lamp's pale gleam seems swallowed by the world.

When the sun emerges, the artificial lights, the flickering, smoking, and noisy ones, seem as dim as the darkness of night.

طلع العشق أيها العشاق   واستنارت بنوره الأفاق.[47]

The dawn of love ascends, a beacon bright, O hearts entwined, awake!
Its radiant touch upon the world, a splendor newly made.
Where once obscurity prevailed, horizons now ignite,
Infused with love's transcendent glow, where souls in unison take flight.

You have created lamps for yourselves, poured oil in one, gasoline in another, and given them names, but none can show you the truth!

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ.[48]

The ever-present presence of God and His absence

Ḥaḍrat Sayyid al-Shuhada (peace be upon him) says:

مَتَى غِبْتَ حَتَّى تَحْتَاجَ إِلَى دَلِيلٍ يَدُلُّ عَلَيْكَ؟[49]

O God, when were You absent so we would need to find a reason to guide us to You?

Had You been absent or not before us, we would have sought others, inquiring, "Where is God? Guide us to Him!" But You are not absent; You are ever-present, more present than any other entity. Your existence precedes the reason and guide, making You the First and the guide the Second. You are closer to us than we are to ourselves, as You are the First, and we are after You.

إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ.[50]

When the two receivers receive, one is on the right, and one is on the left. This verse refers to two angels recording a person's deeds: one on the right and one on the left. The angel on the right side records the good deeds, and the angel on the left records the evil deeds.

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ.

And We are closer to him than his jugular vein.

Here are some verses by Furuwghī Basṭāmī about the presence of God:

کی رفته‌ای ز دل که تمنا کنم تو را   کی بوده‌ای نهفته که پیدا کنم تو را
غیبت نکرده‌ای که شوم طالب حضور   پنهان نگشته‌ای که هویدا کنم تو را
مستانه کاش در حرم و دیر بگذری   تا قبله‌گاه مؤمن و ترسا کنم تو را.[51]

Where from my heart have you, oh Love, withdrawn?
A yearning fills this empty, searching dawn.
No absence hides you, nor can seeking find,
Forever present, yet unseen by my blind mind.
A hundred thousand guises you display,
A symphony for eyes that learn to see your way.
Through struggles, eyes become a mirrored plane,
To glimpse your form and be forever slain.
Within my depths, reflect your sacred light,
Let me become the vessel, shining bright.
Intoxicated, grace both mosque and shrine,
Unite all hearts, a love both yours and mine.

With God's presence in the heart of every creature, everywhere is a mosque and a place of purification.

In a remarkable declaration, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his Ahl al-Bayt) stated, "The entire world has been designated a mosque and a place of purification for me."

جُعِلَتْ لِيَ الأَرْضُ مَسْجِداً وَطَهُوراً.[52]

For all places are manifestations of the Divine!

Ḥaḍrat Sayyid al-Shuhada asserts:

وَ مَتَى بَعُدتَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ الآثارُ هِيَ الَّتِي تُوصِلُ إلَيكَ؟[53]

How far have you distanced yourself that only the traces, effects, or signs lead us to you?

Divine Being, perhaps your essence lies beyond our immediate grasp, prompting us to seek connection with you through intermediaries close to us. Yet, those intermediaries themselves find solace in your presence. You are ultimately closer than any earthly companion while they remain comparatively distant. This pursuit of closeness resembles a man struggling in a vast sea. He desperately reaches out, attempting to push back the water and stay afloat. Ironically, his efforts only hasten his submersion. The reality is that the sea encompasses him entirely. There is no dry patch within its depths; water surrounds him.

Then Ḥaḍrat says:

عَمِيَت عَينٌ لا تَراكَ عَلَيها رَقيبًا و خَسِرَت صَفقَةُ عَبدٍ لَم تَجعَل لَهُ مِن حُبِّكَ نَصيبًا.[54]

Blind is the eye that does not see You as its overseer, and wretched is the bargain of the enslaved person who has not made a share of Your love for himself. Despite possessing physical sight, individuals who fail to acknowledge the divine presence are truly blind. Their perception is limited to the immediate world – the flame of a lamp, the flicker of a candle, the movement across a desert – yet they fail to comprehend the source that illuminates all: the sun. Similarly, those captivated by the achievements, knowledge, and fleeting glories of the human experience – structures of power that can bring even the most brilliant minds to their knees, humbling the strongest and most accomplished – are blind to a greater truth. They perceive the world around them but lack the spiritual sight to recognize the ultimate source. This blindness necessitates a correction of vision.

Loss for Some and Profit for Others in the Market of the World

In this world, a pervasive sense of trading compels many to sacrifice their well-being, financial security, self-respect, and physical health. The relentless cycle of time, with its ever-turning days and nights, seems to erode our resources relentlessly. Regardless of our desires, this passage of time inevitably diminishes our dignity, transforming it into a sense of insignificance. It weakens our health,

leading to illness. It certainly shortens our lives and ultimately ushers in our mortality. On top of every existence, a flag of nonexistence is raised!

Though currently classified as living beings (Homo sapiens), humans face their inevitable mortality. Health, once vibrant, can deteriorate with time. Material wealth is impermanent, and prosperity can be fleeting. Even knowledge, a source of intellectual power, diminishes with age. What do we acquire in exchange for these "ones" and the losses we sustain? If it is the love of God, then we have triumphed, and this trade has been a net gain. Otherwise, it is a loss.

خَسِرَتْ صَفْقَةُ عَبْدٍ.

A servant's bargain is lost.

An individual who sacrifices their well-being in this life – their time, health, resources, and intellectual development – yet fails to achieve spiritual fulfillment has ultimately lived a life devoid of meaning. Their earthly existence culminates in a state of spiritual loss.

اللهُمَّ عَرِّفْنی نَفْسَکَ فَإِنَّکَ إن لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنی نَفْسَکَ لم أعرِفْ رَسولَکَ.[55]

O God, make me know Yourself, for if You do not make Yourself known to me, I will not know Your Messenger.

It does not say:

اللهم عرِّفنی رَسولکَ فإنّکَ إن لم تُعَرِّفنی.

O God, make me know Your Messenger, for if You do not make me know Your Messenger, I will not know You.

Oh Divine Being, illuminate me with the knowledge of Your Essence, for if You do not unveil Yourself to me, I shall remain forever unaware of Your Chosen Messenger.

This concept does not emanate from the lower realms but instead descends from the higher echelons! It signifies that the sacred light of Divine existence radiates from the boundless realm of Oneness and gradually transforms the multifaceted universes. It is not that the contingent beings, situated at the tangible surface of this metaphorical cone, embark on an ascent to enlighten humanity about that pinnacle; such a notion is erroneous.

بِکَ عَرَفْتُکَ و أنتَ دَلَلْتَنی عَلَیکَ.

I learned of You through You, and You guided me to Yourself!

You illuminated my path to Your existence; thus, You became both the signifier and the signified! You are the one who revealed and the one who was revealed, the knower and the known, and the lover and the beloved!

One intriguing area of philosophical inquiry concerns the concept of the unification of the knower and the known. This concept has been a focal point for significant debate. Imam Sajjad's quote, "And You have guided me to Yourself," encapsulates the essence of these arguments. The statement suggests that the signifier and the signified are the same. It is not a suggestion of two separate entities, for that would imply opposition. When the signifier and the signified are unified, it extends to other concepts like lover and beloved, knower and known, ruler and ruled.

وَ دَعَوتَنی إلَیکَ.

And you called me to You. Therefore, you called, so you became the caller; you called to Yourself, so you became the one called. You called, and you were called!

وَ لَو لا أنتَ لَم أدرِ ما أنتَ.

I would not know who You are if it were not for You! The reason I know who You are is because You are You! You showed Yourself to me in all of my experiences, and in those experiences, You revealed Yourself to me.

The supplication recited on the Day of Arafa contains numerous passages illuminating this concept. For instance, it states:

تَعرَّفتَ إلَیَّ فی کلِّ شَیءٍ فلا أجهَلُکَ فی شَیءٍ.[56]

O God, You have revealed Yourself in the myriad manifestations of the universe, and through these manifestations, You have unveiled Yourself to me.

May the Exalted God, with His divine grace, grant humanity the ability to ascend to these stations of knowledge and insight. Let us endeavor not to settle for the rudimentary understanding of religion often associated with the elderly.

What questions will God ask humans on the Day of Judgment?

Individuals grapple with various social, political, economic, and religious issues. There's a frequent assumption that basic knowledge is sufficient to navigate these complexities and that negative consequences are unlikely. However, the focus should not be on potential retribution. These issues retain their significance even in the absence of divinely imposed sanctions. Disregarding the concept of a

transcendent force (or purpose) may lead to underestimating the true gravity of these concerns.

وَلَو لا أنتَ لَم أدرِ ما أنتَ.

And if not for You, I would not know what You are.

Divine source: all knowledge and existence stem from you. Through understanding you, we gain an understanding of the world. Conversely, without this understanding, all else remains obscure. By the wisdom of the words of Imam Sajjad and the enduring pursuit of truth, may we gain ever-greater knowledge and insight. May we overcome our shortcomings and strive for continual improvement. May our journey of learning and development be a continuous process. Grant us, o Divine One, the wisdom to transform our limitations in understanding into ever-expanding knowledge.

بِمحمَّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرينَ و صلِّ علىٰ محمَّدٍ و آلهِ أجمعينَ.

By Muhammad and his pure family, and may God bless Muhammad and his family.

Session three: The promptness of divine response and the servants' laxity in prayer

أعوذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيطانِ الرَّجيم
بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمٰنِ الرَّحيم
و صَلَّى اللهُ عَلىٰ محمَّدٍ و آلِهِ الطيِّبين
و لَعنةُ اللهِ عَلىٰ أعدائِهِم أجمَعين

الحَمدُ لِلّٰهِ الّذي أدعُوهُ فيُجيبُني، و إن كُنتُ بَطيئاً حينَ يَدعُوني؛ و الحمدُ لِلّٰهِ الّذي أسألُهُ فيُعطيني، و إن كُنتُ بخيلاً حينَ يَستَقرِضُني.

Exalted is the One I call upon, and He responds to me despite my being slow and remiss when He calls upon me. Exalted is the One I supplicate, and He grants me, despite my miserliness when He seeks a loan from me.

Unanswered prayers expose the lack of fulfillment of prayer

In prayer, believers seek communion with God, trusting in a divine response. The sincerity and depth of this communication are believed to influence the nature of that response. Prayer and response are seen as interconnected; if a perceived lack of response occurs, it may prompt reflection on the authenticity of the prayer itself.

وإذا سألك عبادي عني فإني قريب أجيب دعوة الداع إذا دعان. [57]

And when My servants ask Me for something, I am near them. I answer the caller's call when he calls Me.

Humans' lethargy in response to the divine summons

We readily seek God's intervention whenever we face challenges. However, our response is often hesitant or delayed when God calls upon us. We may question the task, raise concerns about its feasibility, or even express resistance.

The Imam says: Praise belongs to that God whom I call, and there is an answer following Him, even though I am slow and tardy when He calls me!

The order should be reversed! When God, the ultimate sovereign, the highest authority, and the source of all power and life, calls upon us with a benevolent purpose, our response should be immediate and enthusiastic. There should be no hesitation, not even a moment's delay, between His call and our complete obedience.

Nevertheless, what obligation does God have to answer our prayers? What right do we have over God, and what law have we established that would force God to answer our prayers in the world of creation? We are possible, weak, poor, and dead. God, on the other hand, possesses beautiful attributes and exalted names.

و لهُ الكبرياءُ و الآلاءُ! [58]

The wonder of God's quick response in the face of the servants' laziness!

God's immense mercy, kindness, and love are evident in His immediate response to our pleas. However, our shortcomings—sluggishness, apathy, and inattentiveness—often lead us to be slow in answering His calls, be they commands, prohibitions, or invitations. This tardiness can be interpreted as a doubt in His absolute authority and the certainty of His guidance. Worse still, we filter these invitations through the lens of self-interest, asking, 'Does this benefit me? Should I accept Divine's offer?'

While faith and devotion are commendable, delayed action can sometimes be misconstrued as hesitancy or indifference. However, divine providence is ever-present. Even when our initial responses are slow, our prayers are ultimately answered. Yet, it's important to remember that this divine call is continuous. We are constantly invited to a deeper connection, and while our acceptance may be continuous, our promptness in response can improve.

The swiftness of God's response, following the request of His servants

و الحَمدُ لِلّهِ الّذی أسألُهُ فیُعطِینی، و إن کُنتُ بَخِیلاً حِینَ یَستَقرِضُنی.

Praise God, whom I ask, and He gives me, even if I am stingy when He borrows from me.

Just as every prayer offered to God can be seen as a gift, so our response to His generosity. God's bounty is infinite, and His acts are driven by pure benevolence and a desire to bless His creations. He gives freely and without limit, answering our pleas and fulfilling our needs. However, when God calls upon us, our response is often lacking. Mandatory charitable contributions go unmet, voluntary acts of kindness are infrequent, and even essential obligations to family and community are neglected. While we readily petition the divine for blessings, our generosity often falls short. This creates a significant dissonance: fervent prayers are offered, yet giving is hesitant; faith is professed, yet duties are neglected. This inconsistency is a cause for reflection. The situation is so critical that a call to action emanates from our faith's source. It's not a demand for a single offering but an invitation for sustained support - a contribution, big or small. Any level of participation is welcomed. The question remains: will we truly answer this call?

Why people refrain from giving qarḍ al-ḥasanah (loans with no interest)

من ذا الذي يقرض الله قرضًا حسنًا فيضاعفه له وله أجر كريم.[59]

Who will lend Allah a goodly loan so He will multiply it for him, and he will have a noble reward?

مثل الذين ينفقون أموالهم في سبيل الله كمثل حبة أنبتت سبع سنابل في كل سنبلة مائة..[60]

The parable of those who spend their wealth in Allah's way is like the parable of a grain that sprouts seven ears, a hundred grains in every ear. Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. Allah is all-encompassing and Knowing.

وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُ.

God gives to those He wills, even more than this.

In the cosmic order, charity is multiplied many times over, so join the noble effort of lending without interest for the sake of God. Does anyone truly heed this request?

وَ إن كُنتُ بَخِيلاً حِينَ يَستَقرِضُنِى.

When God borrows from me and asks for a loan, I hesitate to offer any!

The Absolute Ownership of God over the Servant and His Possessions

In God's eyes, we may sometimes fall short in our generosity. It's important to remember that all we possess ultimately belongs to God.

لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ..[61]

To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth.

"He is the King," signifying the one who possesses absolute authority. Ownership of all things resides with Him, and He has the sole discretion over their use. This concept is reflected in the revered opening Surah of the Quran, Al-Fatihah, where we recite:

مَٰلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ.[62]

The Owner of the Day of Judgment.

Many readers have recited the phrase "Māliki yawm ad-Din," which translates to "The King of the Day of Judgment." In the context of prayer, reciting "Maliki yawm ad-Din" (مَلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ) poses no issue. This recitation is valid as it is supported by narrations tracing back to Prophet Muhammad. [63]

God is the Absolute Owner and Sovereign. We and all we possess belong to God without reservation, for we are His servants.

العَبدُ و ما فى يَدِهِ كان لِمولاه.

The servant and all that he owns belong to his master.

While God, as the Master (*Mawlā*), possesses absolute dominion over our possessions, for we are His servants, He chooses not to exert this authority in a

punitive manner. He doesn't resort to anger or vengeance nor unleash destructive forces like lightning strikes, floods, or earthquakes to seize what is rightfully His. Instead, He grants us time and calls upon us to offer Him a loan through acts of charity and good deeds.

Philanthropic giving, extending assistance to those in need, represents a noble act. It invigorates the human spirit and loosens the bonds of self-interest that can constrain us. Through such acts, we cultivate a more thoughtful capacity for compassion.

The difficulty of charity for those attached to the world

There once lived a man burdened by outstanding debts on his deathbed after a lengthy and prosperous life built on honest trade. Seeking to rectify his affairs, he summoned the local mullah. "I have prepared my will," the man rasped. "Please calculate the sum of my remaining debts. Then, bind me to this pillar. With the key, open the safe and withdraw only the amount necessary to settle these debts." The mullah, perplexed, inquired, "Why bind yourself? Is it not simpler to raise and retrieve the key yourself?" The man weakly responded, "I lack the strength." Accepting his explanation, the mullah meticulously calculated the man's financial obligations. Once complete, he instructed the man to be secured to the pillar. With the man bound, the mullah ordered someone to retrieve the key and open the safe. However, as the key neared the lock, the man erupted in a frenzy of shouts and accusations. "Stop!" he bellowed, "This mullah is a thief! He attempts to rob me!" He strained against the ropes, desperately striving to break free.

A devoted companion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) made a remarkable decision in his will. Upon his passing, he entrusted the Prophet to distribute his entire wealth in the name of charity, specifically from the vast warehouse that held an abundance of Medina's finest dates.

After the companion's burial rites were concluded, the Prophet and his companions honored the man's wishes. They opened the warehouse doors, revealing a mesmerizing sight: sacks of dates overflowing with the rich flavors of Medina's celebrated produce.

News of the unexpected bounty spread like wildfire, and the impoverished inhabitants of Medina were quick to gather. With eager hands, they divided and consumed the abundant dates, emptying the warehouse.

As the crowd dispersed, one of the dates lay crushed and discarded, having met an unfortunate fate underfoot. The Prophet picked up the damaged date and

held it up for his companions. He then spoke with a touch of gentle rebuke: Had this companion, with his own hands, given away even this one crushed date for the sake of charity, his act would have been far more meritorious in the eyes of God than simply bequeathing his wealth upon his death.[64]

The Preeminence of Giving Charity During Life over Bequeathing Wealth

Conferring wealth upon charitable causes after death, while commendable, is akin to the spilled oil lamp dedicated to a shrine. The lamp shatters, its precious oil seeping into the streets, prompting the individual to declare their intention of dedicating the oil to the shrine.

خسر الدنيا والآخرة ذلك هو الخسران المبين.[65]

They are losing both this world and the next. This is indeed a palpable loss.

The Abused Wife and the Bizarre Will

It is said that there was a couple where the husband frequently mistreated the wife. The husband habitually battered his wife, resorting to physical violence, verbal abuse, and neglecting his financial responsibilities. In essence, the woman endured considerable hardship and suffering throughout their marriage. Upon reaching old age, the husband composed a peculiar will directed towards his wife. The will expressed regret and sought forgiveness for his past transgressions: the beatings, the curses, the abandonment during evenings, and the neglectful travels. However, instead of offering a straightforward apology, the will outlined a bizarre act of revenge disguised as catharsis. It instructed the wife to tie a rope to his deceased body and drag it throughout the house and yard. This performative humiliation, the will claimed, would allow the wife to release her anger and find solace. The will shockingly granted her the "right" to carry out this act.

Following the husband's death, the woman, by the will, attached a rope to his body and began dragging it inside the house. This act attracted the attention of the husband's brother and uncle, who arrived at the scene in outrage.

Misinterpreting the situation, they assumed the woman was disrespecting the deceased and proceeded to beat her. Onlookers joined in the assault, further mistreating the woman under the belief that they were upholding the terms of the will. Defending herself, the woman delivered a powerful retort to her deceased husband: "May God curse both your life and your death! You never lived [by supporting me], and you never died [with honor]."

They are tragically mistaken. They fail to grasp that resources devoted to God's cause endure eternally. They cling to the misconception that spending equates to loss. They lack understanding that what they expend for good remains, while what they hoard ultimately vanishes. Their worldly wealth is impermanent and will perish, leaving this world behind. Ironically, people recite the Fatiha (the opening chapter of the Quran) after their death, yet their heirs dispute over the very wealth they leave behind. This wealth, meant to be a source of comfort, becomes the catalyst for hate. It fuels their greed, leading them to immorality and vice. In their pursuit of material gain, they not only corrupt their souls but potentially degrade the spirit of the deceased.

Nonetheless, the wealth bestowed by humans is entrusted to a particular repository, safeguarded within a formidable steel vault impervious to devastation. No thief nor fire can claim it, as this chest is fireproof. Likewise, the devil cannot breach this chest; it is exceptionally resilient. This vault lies within the Lord's dominion, entrusted to humanity for safekeeping. He has graciously declared, "Loan it to Me, and I shall safeguard it for you."

Consider a scenario where you possess money and fear its loss to theft. You approach a trusted friend and propose, "Would you be willing to hold this for safekeeping?" Your friend agrees, and upon entrusting them with the money, its ownership temporarily transfers to their care. They become responsible for its safekeeping. Any anxieties regarding the money dissipate upon your return, as you can readily reclaim it. This exemplifies the core principle of lending.

The Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, was about to embark on one of his many battles and wars. Before departing, he expressed his desire to his wife, "Take this sheep from our home and slaughter it. Then, distribute its entire meat in the path of God!"

Upon his return after a couple of days, the Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) inquired, "Did you slaughter the sheep as instructed and distribute its meat?" The wife affirmed, "Yes, revered Messenger of God! All that remains is the shoulder. I followed your orders and gave away all of the sheep's meat in the path of God, except one shoulder." The Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) remarked, "Withholding the shoulder cut of a sheep from charity renders everything else given insignificant in God's eyes. However, keeping the shoulder for yourself is considered a form of charity to oneself."[66]

The delightful statement of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) on the leniency of God

In a thought-provoking passage attributed to Imam Ali (peace be upon him), God's mercy is explored through a unique representation. The passage within Nahj al-Balāghah emphasizes the potential consequence of neglecting one's charitable obligations: God, The All-Merciful God, grants man respite, and then He sits in ambush and suddenly brings man down.

How long will God give man respite? Despite material abundance and comfortable circumstances, humanity can sometimes disregard the importance of charitable giving. While some indulge in extravagant meals, they may be reluctant to share their wealth with those less fortunate. A sudden, personal experience with vulnerability, such as a choking incident, can serve as a stark reminder of our shared human fragility and the need for compassion.[67]

The End of Exploitation: A Cautionary Tale

During a gathering near the Shah Mosque, a local shopkeeper shared a story that resonated deeply with everyone present. It served as a stark reminder of the injustices faced by hardworking laborers.

One particular shopkeeper in the area was known for his exploitative practices. He routinely denied porters their rightful wages, dismissing their requests for payment with the callous instruction to seek compensation from the party that sent them.

This shopkeeper's blatant disregard reached a boiling point when a porter arrived with a heavy load. As the porter rightfully demanded his payment, the shopkeeper, indulging in a fried chicken meal, dismissively repeated his usual tactic.

Driven to desperation, the porter issued a mighty challenge. He questioned whether the stolen wages would turn the delicious food into poison in the shopkeeper's stomach. Blinded by arrogance, the shopkeeper confidently proclaimed that the food would "go down like a smoothie." In a shocking turn of events, a piece of chicken bone lodged itself in the shopkeeper's throat, causing him to choke and collapse. The shopkeeper tragically passed away on the way to the hospital.

□ They say, "God is always watching."

إن الله بالمرصاد.[68]

God has bestowed upon you wealth, resources, and opportunities. Savor your meal, but remember that this impoverished man who has toiled under the

scorching sun, transporting a heavy load seeks only a modest compensation for his labor. Why should you deny him his rightful due?

In the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the unbelievers and polytheists of Mecca would often challenge his teachings, arguing: "If God truly wished to feed and clothe the poor, He would do so effortlessly. Why, then, do you, Muhammad, command us to give charity? Indeed, if God has chosen to make these people poor, it is His divine will, and our intervention is unnecessary.

In a divine scheme, God has separated humanity into two distinct classes: the needy and the affluent. This seemingly paradoxical arrangement serves a purpose, propelling individuals from mere material existence to the heights of true humanity. This is the essence of the transformative school of life.

An Example of the Quality of Education in the Islamic School of Thought

God, the Most Exalted, holds ultimate ownership over all things. However, He has entrusted humanity with a portion of this wealth in His infinite mercy and generosity. While humans are granted a degree of agency in their use, the trustworthy source of all possessions remains divine. This concept is further emphasized in the Quran, where God describes Himself as a borrower from His servants. The verse "Lend Me your wealth" should not be interpreted literally. It signifies God's desire for believers to utilize their resources for righteous purposes, ultimately returning all benefits to Him through acts of charity and good deeds. In essence, though seemingly ours, wealth is ultimately a gift from God. We are merely stewards entrusted with their responsible management.

Divine endowment, not human possession, dictates the actual ownership of wealth. While we may perceive ownership as a tangible concept, ours is merely a nominal expression of God's overarching dominion. In His infinite benevolence and mercy, He refrains from chastising His servants, instead beckoning them towards righteousness, compassion, affection, and kindness. This transformative approach to human development, grounded in divine favor, presents God as assuming the role of a borrower. This concept resonates with the Hadith Qudsi,

أنا جَليسُ مَن ذاكَرَني، و أنا مُطيعُ مَن أطاعَني.[69]

I am the companion of the one who remembers Me, and I am the obedient of the one who obeys Me.

In an affirmative expression of humbleness and divine love, God proclaims, "I am obedient!" This seemingly paradoxical statement highlights the intense

interconnectedness between God and humanity. Just as a servant may pledge obedience to their master, God, in His infinite grace, reciprocates by aligning His actions with the hearts and intentions of those who wholeheartedly submit to His will. This concept transcends a human master-servant relationship. Here, the emphasis is on the absolute power and dominion of God, the sole ruler of the universe, who declares this principle.

والسموات مطويات بيمينه.[70]

And the heavens folded up in His right hand.

Direct Availability of the True God

Praise belongs to that God from whom I ask, and He gives to me, even though I am stingy when He borrows from me and asks for a loan.[71]

و الحمدُ للّٰهِ الّذی أُنادیهِ کُلّما شئتُ لحاجتی، و أخلُو به حیثُ شئتُ لسرّی بغیر شفیعٍ فیقضی لی حاجتی.

All praise is due to God, the ever-present and accessible. I can call upon Him whenever needed and commune with Him in private. He is the confidant of my deepest secrets, and no intermediary is required to connect me to His divine presence.

All praise is due to God, who allows me to commune with Him anytime! Unlike earthly masters, He has no physical limitations—no doors, guards, or appointments. His service is ever-accessible. I can offer prayers and pour out my heart to Him freely, wherever possible: at home, in nature, at a mosque, even while preparing for bed or performing ablutions.

Indeed, it is recommended to say a specific supplication upon entering the bathroom.

أعوذُ بالله من الرّجس النّجس الخبیث المُخبث الشّیطان الرّجیم![72]

I seek refuge in Allah from the impure, filthy, evil, and accursed Satan.

It is recommended that specific supplications be recited from reliable sources.[73] Supplication (munājāt) means whispering and speaking quietly; Nidā means calling someone from afar. Allah grants permission to talk to him about any time (munājāt), day or night, between dawn and sunrise, near sunset, [74] or even in the middle of the night when you wake up with a sore back and want to roll over. Say: Ya Allah.[75] There is no restriction on saying "Ya Allah" (O God). A person can call upon God at any time, in any situation, and from any place.[76]

In the depth of human connection with the divine, the seeking heart, regardless of its proximity, finds solace and attentiveness in the divine embrace. Even as the ardent supplicant strives for communion, the divine essence transcends their endeavors, graciously inclining in firm receptivity. Could any deity surpass this in the intimacy of spiritual connection, this attunement to the soul's most subtle yearnings?

All praise is due to God, the One I call upon whenever a need arises. I commune with Him directly, in the privacy of my heart, for any secret I may hold. There is no intermediary required to connect me to Him! Without an intercessor, He fulfills my need. I require no mediator to present my needs or to deliver them for His response. No! My connection with God is direct and immediate.

The phrase "بِکَ عَرَفتُکَ (bika 'arafatuka)"[77] translates to "Through You, I have known You." This signifies that actual knowledge of God comes only through His guidance and revelation. The phrase emphasizes that all intercessors appointed by God act according to His will, not independently. It underlines God's absolute power and sovereignty by stating that no entity in the universe possesses effectiveness or power except Him. Consequently, every intercessor functions solely by His permission and agency. This clarifies that intercessors cannot independently intervene and fulfill someone's needs. [78]

الحَمدُ للّهِ الّذی لا أدعُو غیرَهُ، و لَو دَعَوتُ غیرَهُ لَم یَستَجِب لی دعائی!

All praise belongs to that One God upon whom I solely depend. He is the only One I worship, the only One I genuinely call upon in every need. While He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and All-Knowing, my supplications are a constant reminder to myself of His absolute power and my dependence. Any call directed elsewhere would be in vain, as only one can answer or truly hear.

What a magnificent God we worship! This Divine Being possesses absolute power, unlike a friend, lover, or any other person whose capabilities are limited. We cannot even grasp the full extent of this limitless power, yet anything a person can achieve ultimately stems from God's hand. He is capable of everything from the most minor worldly concerns to the grandest matters beyond this realm. All praise be to this God! Filled with awe, one can only exclaim, "How remarkable! This God is truly wondrous!" I persistently seek this divine source of power and implore its assistance. Turning to any other entity leads only to disappointment and empty hands. I approach this God in all matters, and never have I been left wanting. Every time I have turned to this divine source, my endeavors have been

met with abundant blessings. However, even a single attempt to rely on any other power would undoubtedly result in emptiness.

و لو دعوت غیره لم یستجب لی دعائی.

And if I call upon anyone other than Him, He will not answer my prayer or listen to my call!

Putting one's trust in anything other than Allah will lead to disappointment.

و الحمد لله الذی لا أرجو غیره، و لو رجوت غیره لأخلف رجائی.

We offer all praise to this Divine Being. In Arabic culture, a traditional expression of reverence and respect for the divine is "عاشت إیدک (Asha't Eidak)," which translates to "May You Live Forever!" Our language offers similar sentiments through various expressions of welcome, longevity, praise, and divine blessings. The magnificence of this God is unparalleled. All forms of praise and glorification belong to Him, for He embodies absolute perfection. Even a lifetime dedicated solely to worshipping and praising this Divine Being would fall short of expressing His true worth. Throughout my life, I have placed my hopes and aspirations solely in Him. He has always been my sole refuge; any hope placed elsewhere would have been in vain. My trust in this God is built upon a foundation of truth, for any other foundation would have left me empty-handed.

و الحمد لله الذی وکلنی إلیه فأکرمنی، و لم یکلنی إلی الناس فیهینونی.

All praise is due to God, who has guided me on His path. He has taken me under His wing, called me to Himself, and assumed control of my life. Having grasped the reins of our destinies, He has bestowed great honor upon us. He welcomes us with open arms, acknowledges our worth, and prepares a haven for our souls. Upon entering this celestial abode, we are met with the utmost dignity and nobility, a testament to His infinite compassion. In His wisdom, He has chosen not to leave us at the mercy of others who might subject us to humiliation and disrespect.

In a divine proclamation, God beckons us, "Come to Me, and no other." He urges us, "Turn away from seeking solace or assistance from mere mortals." He commands us, "Sever your hope from anything that is not of Me, regardless of its source. You will find no sweetness, comfort, or scorching disappointment and humiliation in such pursuits. It would be like seeking refuge from the scorching sun only to encounter parched earth and burning thirst."

If God had not drawn us close to His divine presence, if He had not secured our hearts' allegiance to Him, and if He had not taken complete control over our

destinies, humanity would not have been embraced by His merciful grace. Instead, we would have been left at the mercy of mortals, instructed to "Seek your fulfillment from others."

Imagine the abject humiliation, the utter misery, and the misfortune that would have befallen us! Who exactly are these "others" we would be forced to rely on? We have a God who says, "If all the people of the world are your enemies, I am enough for you!"

Hadrat Sayyid al-Shuhada, peace be upon him, says: O God, what has he lost who has found You? What has he gained who has lost You?[79]

He who has found You has everything, and he who has lost You has nothing! Not that he has something other than You; he has nothing!

خسر الدنيا و الآخرة.

He has lost both this world and the Hereafter.

ذلك هو الخسران المبين.[80]

This is indeed a palpable loss.

Establishing the Path of Love and Friendship with Servants in the Midst of the Lord's Wealth and Needlessness from Them

و الحمد لله الذي تحبب إلي و هو غني عني.

All praise is due to God, who, despite His self-sufficiency and abundance, has established a path of friendship with me.

How can we express this gift? How can we fully grasp its significance? Consider a stranger who desires your friendship. How extensively would they prepare? They might bow respectfully, display humility, offer a gift, greet you warmly, clean your clothes, assist you with footwear, even journey with you, and provide countless acts of service – all in hopes of earning your favor.

Imam Sajjad, peace be upon him, expresses gratitude in this saying:

و الحمد لله الذي تحبب إلي و هو غني عني.

All praise is due to God, who has instilled His love within me. This means God took the initiative and employed extraordinary and marvelous measures to cultivate His love in the heart of Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him).

و الحمد لله الذي تحبب إلي و هو غني عني.

And He is wealthy and independent of me; He does not need me.

By adding this phrase, Imam Sajjad emphasizes God's complete self-sufficiency. He highlights the immense honor bestowed upon him by God's love despite God not needing the Imam's love or devotion.

Even if every single human being from the dawn of time (Adam) to the Day of Judgement were to reject faith and turn away from God, it would diminish His majesty not one iota. Such is His absolute dominion! Yet, despite this immense power, He remains infinitely compassionate.

In the supplication of the devotees (Munājāt Murīdīn), Imam Sajjad, peace be upon him, says:

يا مَن هو عَلَى المُقبِلينَ عليه مُقبِلٌ، و بِالعَطفِ عَلَيهِم عائِدٌ مُفضِلٌ، و بِالغافِلينَ عن ذكرِهِ رَحيمٌ رَءُوفٌ، و بِجَذبِهِم إلَى بابِهِ وَدُودٌ عَطُوفٌ.[81]

You who turn with compassion, kindness, and generosity towards those who turn to You! You receive them with immense bounty and blessings, embracing them in Your merciful arms and enveloping them in Your grace. Even those who neglect to remember You and turn away from You, You do not abandon them or disregard them. Instead, You continuously strive to draw them back to Your presence.

O God, You persistently guide us towards entering Your eternal dwelling, continuously calling out: "Where are you going? Turn back! Come hither! That path is not the way; it leads to a lonely end, a mirage of thirst and illusion." Such is the world - adorned with fleeting pleasures, a burden to carry, a source of lack and insatiable desires.

Satan himself is but a deceitful whisper! Turn towards this path, where boundless mercy reigns supreme, paradise awaits, and life-giving water quenches our thirst. Here, you will find solace in the shade, warmth under the sun's gentle rays, the illumination of knowledge, and freedom from the darkness of ignorance. You approach us in countless forms and manifestations, revealing Yourself to us graciously.

با صد هزار جلوه برون آمدی که من   با صد هزار دیده تماشا کنم تو را.[82]

A hundred thousand guises you unfold,   A hundred thousand eyes I hold.

الحَمدُ للّهِ الَّذی تَحَبَّبَ إلَیَّ.

While God's love is constant, a deeper connection with Him can be cultivated through devotion and righteous life. Even when we are unaware or stray from His path, God's invitation to return to a closer relationship remains open.

وَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِی یَحْلُمُ عَنِّی حَتَّی کَأَنِّی لَا ذَنْبَ لِی، فَرَبِّی أَحْمَدُ شَیْءٍ عِنْدِی وَ أَحَقُّ بِحَمْدِی.

All praise is due to this God of infinite patience and forbearance! His tolerance for my transgressions makes it feel like He overlooks them entirely. This sense of divine patience has instilled a deep affection for my Lord. Therefore, I recognize that His worthiness of praise surpasses all others.

Although my transgressions warrant punishment, He withholds it. Even after repeated offenses, He demonstrates remarkable forbearance. My repeated iniquities are met with continued patience as if no wrongdoing has occurred. This is the nature of His interaction with us, a testament to His extraordinary and limitless patience.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِی یَحْلُمُ عَنِّی حَتَّی کَأَنِّی لَا ذَنْبَ لِی.

God's mercy obliterates our sins in the face of our transgressions. Thus, He instructs Adam to seek repentance, and upon Adam's genuine remorse, God declares, 'Your record is pristine; let the concept of sin be banished from your mind.'

التَّائِبُ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ کَمَنْ لَا ذَنْبَ لَه.[83]

True repentance carries the power to erase the very existence of sin. God washes away the stain of transgression in His immense compassion, rendering the repentant sinner as if they had never strayed from the righteous path. The depth of God's mercy extends so far that the repentant sinner, instead of experiencing shame before their Creator, encounters a sense of divine embarrassment on their behalf. God, in His boundless love, declares, "Let go of the very concept of sin. It no longer has a place in your life." Therefore, this is my Lord, my God, who manifests such mercy. His essence, attributes, and actions are beyond human comprehension. My aspirations are anchored solely in Him, and the reins of my endeavors are firmly within His grasp. He guides and executes them with unfailing perfection.

فَأَکْرَمَنِی.

He honored me.

Through all my challenges, He has never allowed me to waver. He has provided guidance and protected me in times of hardship and difficulty. Even when I have transgressed, His forgiveness has been boundless, as if the transgression never occurred.

فَرَبّي أحمدُ شيءٍ عندي و أحقّ بِحَمدي.

Thus, my Lord holds a position of immense endearment within my heart. I discern He is the supreme recipient of adoration, eclipsing all other entities. He is indeed far more deserving of my admiration! Other beings possess no entitlement to elicit my praise; they are mere ephemeral constructs, incapable of meaningful action or service. Their contributions, if any, are invariably marred by an air of indebtedness, a thousand thanks for a single act of kindness, rendering their services null and void.

يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تبطلوا صدقاتكم بالمن و الأذى.[84]

O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with ingratitude and harm!

When you engage in acts of charity, assistance, or kindness (and charity encompasses a wide range of actions; for example, even removing an obstacle from a Muslim's path is considered a charitable act), do not nullify their reward by exhibiting ingratitude or causing harm. If your good deed is accompanied by boasting or a sense of superiority, it diminishes its value. Similarly, causing damage or using hurtful words towards the recipient can negate the positive impact. However, unlike some who might hold grudges, your Lord (God) is not like that.

With deepening reflection, my awareness of a higher power intensifies. This force shapes my existence, guiding me on a path of self-refinement and spiritual development. Therefore, it merits my complete devotion.

With such a magnificent God – ever-watchful, All-Knowing of the unseen and the manifest, the King of Kings, the Sultan of Sultans – He oversees me constantly; the very thread of my existence rests in His grasp. I am under His watchful eye; He governs every facet of my being. Why would I sing the praises of any lesser entity? Why supplicate to anything other than Him? Why should I praise or venerate another when they are but a fragile servant, no different from myself?

بِمحمّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرينَ و صلِّ علیٰ محمّدٍ و آلهِ أجمعينَ.

By Muhammad and his pure family, and may God bless Muhammad and his family.

أعوذ بالله من الشّيطان الرّجيم
بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم
و صلّى اللهُ علىٰ محمّدٍ و آله الطّاهرين
و لعنةُ الله علىٰ أعدائهم أجمعين من الآن إلى يوم الدّين

اللهُمّ إنّى أجِدُ سُبُلَ المَطالِبِ إليكَ مُشرَعةً، و مَناهِلَ الرّجاءِ إليكَ مُترَعةً، و الاستِعانةَ بِفَضلِكَ لِمَن اَمّلَكَ مُباحةً، و أبوابَ الدّعاءِ إليكَ للصّارِخين مَفتوحةً.

O The Exalted God, I perceive that all avenues of petition, appeal, and yearning lead directly to You, and the paths of hope and anticipation are ever-expansive before You.

The word "سُبُل , subul " means "path". Sabīl means path or way. "Mushra'a" means "open" or "wide." "Shāri'" means "street" in the sense of an open area that everyone can pass through, not a private road. "Sharī'a" is a river or stream path so everyone can access it and take water.

As you may have observed, rivers do not always coincide with the ground surface. In some cases, they can be found at significantly lower elevations. Ingenious solutions are implemented to grant more accessible access to the water, particularly when levels drop. One such solution is shaping the riverbank into sloped pathways. These can take the form of steps or sloping surfaces called shari'a. Shari'a means the way that access to water is provided.

لكل جعلنا منكم شرعة ومنهاجا.[85]

O God, I find that the ways of people's requests, demands, prayers, and requests are open to You.

The capacity for individuals to connect with the divine is boundless. Unlike earthly constraints, no limit exists on the number of supplications that can ascend concurrently. Thus, there is no need for divine arbitration or competition for attention, as the source of all existence is infinitely receptive.

The Incapacity of Other Than God in Paying Attention to Requests and Demands, Compared to the Capacity of the Lord

Why is this pathway to communion with the divine open to all while closed to others? Even the limitations of our mortal senses illustrate this difference. When you speak, my understanding crumbles as another voice joins in. Should two, three, four, or even ten seek to speak, their words become a tangle I cannot unravel. Our finite nature restricts us to a single point of reception, unable to grasp

the simultaneous. Yet, the Divine is not so bound. While possessing but a single "ear," not in the earthly sense, for plurality has no domain there, the Divine ear encompasses all. It holds an immensity beyond comprehension, vast enough to receive every voice, every yearning, every whisper of intent. None of these supplications collide or contend, for within the Divine embrace, each finds its place, harmonious and unopposed.

The existence of demand and desire is equal to the number of creatures

Consider the sheer magnitude of supplications directed towards the divine. Each living being on Earth, every human, animal, or creature of the land, sea, and air, possesses a voice, a need, and a plea. Even amidst this immense chorus, the subtlest whisper finds its place. The fluttering of a wind-kissed mosquito is not lost in the thunderous roar of an elephant. The buzzing fly upon its mighty flank and the nocturnal bellow of a herd in their stall, their voices, too, resonate with a distinct purpose. Within the divine expanse, no plea is shrouded, no yearning buried. Each sound reaches its destination, and every request, within its unique space, finds the platform of fulfillment. The answer granted to one is distinct and separate from the response received by another.[86]

A cosmic symphony of supplications resounds across the boundless pact of creation, from the nascent whisper of Earth's origins to the celestial choirs beyond the heavens. Amongst angels and earthly beings, the whispers and roars, the cries and prayers of countless creatures blend in a vibrant, harmonious whole. Yet, within this celestial orchestra, each voice finds its solo, and each yearning echoes perfectly. Though not of earthly flesh, the divine ear transcends all limitations, discerning every plea with flawless precision. To be God, to hold within His embrace the entirety of creation, demands an ear tuned to the universe's every heartbeat, ensuring each plea finds its destined response, a response as magnificent and unique as the soul that uttered it.

Analogies and explanations often illuminate intricate concepts

Consider the human realm, where fallibility reigns, and even the most meticulous individuals encounter the possibility of error. A cherished friend, now esteemed among the scholars of Qum, once imparted a sage warning: "Whenever a letter destined for a comrade's hand graces your pen, let your eyes scrutinize it with utmost care before entrusting it to the confines of an envelope."

Intrigued by this counsel, I inquired about its origin. With a chuckle, he unfolded a narrative of an amusing predicament. "A missive," he began, "hailed from a city we once graced with our presence. Upon its arrival in Qum, the familiar address on its back emblazoned the title 'Your Excellency Mr. So-and-So.' However, upon delving deeper, the contents revealed a bewildering discrepancy. 'I sacrifice myself for you,' it proclaimed, followed by pronouncements devoid of context or relevance to my amicable relationship. Bewildered, I pondered: 'Has bitterness crept into his heart? Does he harbor hidden ill-will or merely jest uncharacteristically?' Such were questions in my mind until the truth emerged – a simple, inadvertent transposition error."

He continued, "Indeed, the unfortunate sender, in the throes of dispatching missives, had mistakenly paired this curious declaration with another letter intended for a different recipient. This other, written with the utmost respect, was meant for his wife, residing in a distant city. It addressed a delicate matter shared among trusted friends. Alas, in the hurried moments of postal preparation, these envelopes became inadvertently swapped, and the perplexed gentleman received a heartfelt message intended for another. Thankfully, both missives ultimately reached their rightful custodians.

This anecdote aptly serves as a poignant reminder of the fallibility inherent in the human condition. But here lies the stark contrast, the chasm that separates the earthly and the divine. For the Exalted God, unlike us mortals, transcends the bounds of imperfection. His every act and decree is imbued with absolute precision, devoid of even the shadow of a misstep. Within this domain of absolute divine perfection, the very concept of error is inconceivable. Indeed, this stark contrast, this gulf between immaculate wisdom and human fallibility, deepens the unfathomable nature of the divine.

Previously, telephone lines weren't buried underground but strung overhead. When I lived in Qom, calling Tehran involved a trip to the telephone office every few months. The office building boasted a wooden pole at its peak, from which many wires fanned out in all directions, casting a dense shadow across the entire alley! In those days, there was no organized system for the wiring. When placing a call, the operator would instruct us, "Proceed to booth number such-and-such!" The person on the other end would bellow, "Hello, hello!" with such force that their voice would surely become hoarse.

This, however, is not the case with our connection to God. Unlike the telegraph or telephone, the lines of communication with the divine never become entangled. There's no electrical interference and no disruption - the information is transmitted with unfailing accuracy and remarkable speed, ensuring the complete absence of error.

The time for dwelling on specifics has passed. We can no longer afford delay, for it will cripple our efforts from the outset. Let us press forward! Our very existence and the success of our endeavors hinges on God's divine power. Every facet of our physical and spiritual growth, every cell in our body - from the heart and lungs to the liver - owes its origin, development, and ultimate purpose to a meticulously designed and awe-inspiring plan. This intricate system operates with flawless precision, never succumbing to error.

A recent childbirth within our family resulted in a beautiful baby boy. Standard hospital protocol involves identification tags for newborns to ensure proper association with their mothers. Unfortunately, another mother in the facility who had given birth delivered a child with less prominent features.

A human error occurred during a routine feeding session where nurses brought the babies to their mothers. The beautiful baby was inadvertently brought to the mother who had delivered the less attractive child. The infant latched on and began feeding. Upon subsequent feeding rounds, the mother with the less attractive child raised a commotion, claiming the beautiful baby as her own. Despite reassurances from the nursing staff about the identification tags in place, the woman adamantly insisted on the mistaken identity. This escalated to a scene requiring intervention from the medical staff. Even when doctors confirmed the child belonged to the other mother, the woman remained unconvinced. Ultimately, a DNA test was conducted to prove the biological connection definitively.

Although the test results unequivocally identified the mothers and their respective children, the woman with the less attractive child continued to assert her claim.

While human actions are susceptible to error, and appearances can be misleading, divine error is fundamentally incompatible with the notion of an omniscient and omnipotent deity.

God's great mercy for those who hope in Him

و مناهِلَ الرَّجاءِ إليكَ مُترَعةٌ.

Tara' means to be filled, to be complete. Tur'a is a canal or ditch dug to carry or connect two separate bodies of water. *Tarah* can also mean a road full of water.

Manāhal, plural of *manhal*, represents a way or path. *Manāhil ar-rajā'* means the ways of hope. The ways of hope to You are open and full of the water of mercy!

To You, the path of hope is a path of abundance, not of scarcity. It is a path of refreshment, not of exhaustion. Those who approach You with hope find themselves immersed in the waters of Your mercy, their journey guided and eased by Your grace. With each step forward, they are strengthened and revitalized, their hope abiding and their spirits buoyed. As they travel this path, they carry with them the assurance of Your acceptance, their hope reaching its fulfillment in Your presence. This is the promise of hope, a covenant of fulfillment that guides the hearts of those who seek Your embrace.

The path of prayer and seeking help from God is not closed

و الاِستعانَةَ بفضلِکَ لِمَن أمّلکَ مُباحَةٌ.

Seeking help through Your grace is clear for those who desire to come to You; it is not concealed!

Those who yearn for a connection with you, harboring a fervent hope for an encounter, must seek guidance and support solely from Your Grace. Through this grace, they will be embraced and empowered to traverse the path towards their ultimate destination.

و أبوابَ الدّعاءِ إليکَ للصّارخين مفتوحةٌ.

The doors of prayer and supplication to You are always open for those who cry out.

وَ أعلَمُ أنّکَ للرّاجين بموضعِ إجابةٍ، و للملهُوفينَ بمرصدِ إغاثةٍ.

I am confident that you offer acceptance to those who hold onto hope in you. You provide a path to rescue and relief for those trapped and burdened by longing and regret.

In life, there are times when we seek someone to address a pressing need, only to find ourselves entangled in a labyrinth of confusion and misdirection. We may follow the guidance of others, but the path remains elusive, and we may eventually abandon our quest due to fatigue and frustration. This is akin to the daunting experience of navigating the legal system, where individuals often need to catch up on their original claims amidst the complexities and delays.

On other occasions, our quest for assistance is facilitated by a direct and accessible intermediary. We may visit the person's home or workplace and

effortlessly connect with them. This simplified approach streamlines our efforts and reduces the risk of getting lost in a maze of intermediaries.

In a remarkable instance, we may seek someone's assistance, and upon arriving, we discover them eagerly awaiting us. They stand on their rooftop, scanning the horizon for our arrival, and upon spotting us, they descend with open arms, inviting us in and embracing us with warmth and concern. The sense of being awaited and cherished is overwhelming, conveying a bond that transcends the mere act of assistance.

The Imam declares, 'O God, for those who place their hope in You, You are a haven of acceptance, and for those who are ensnared by longing and regret, and lay down the weight of their needs and desires at the threshold of Your mercy, You are a watchful sentinel of deliverance! You are the vigilant observer, the guardian of rescue. With all Your might, through Your sacred essence and the angels You have ordained for this mission, You stand ready to embrace those who seek Your solace, answering their calls and fulfilling the supplications of those trapped in despair.

Deprivation and emptiness of man are the result of asking for things other than God

و أنّ في اللهف إلى جُودك و الرّضا بقضائك عوَضاً من منع الباخلين و مندوحةً عمّا في أيدي المُستأثرين.

Lahf" means "regret." It is the burning of the heart and the sadness a person experiences due to troubles, despair, and losses. He sighs and says, "!وا لَهفا" However, if "lahf" is used with "ilā", it means asking for help. "*Bākhil*" from "*bukhl*" means "miser." "*Mandūḥa*" means "reliefs and way out." "*Musta'thir*" is a tyrant who chooses everything for himself.

The Imam says that "seeking help from Your generosity and being content with Your judgment is a substitute for the prohibition that miserly people impose on a person, and it is a relief from what is in the hands of tyrants, arrogant people, and self-aware people.

Suppose an individual seeks refuge in any human being, and those individuals are not imbued with a divine nature. In that case, the mark of unbelief will be imprinted upon their very essence, and the title of arrogance and tyranny will be engraved upon their foreheads. The meaning of a miser is that they will no longer provide for the needs of another, as they are gripped by stinginess. A *Musta'thir*, on the other hand, seeks to monopolize everything for themselves, even resorting

to emptying the pockets of others to expand their own. From where can such individuals possibly provide for the needs of another?

Regardless of the nature of one's needs, seeking refuge in any other than God will inevitably result in a resounding denial from the miser and a torrent of hopelessness, constriction, and scarcity from the tyrant. The consequence is utter destitution and an empty hand.

Yet, O God, as one deeply connected to You, I am aware that seeking refuge in Your generosity and kindness, which I perpetually seek in You and Your benevolence, while also finding solace in Your divine decree, grants me the understanding that whatever You ordain for us is the quintessence of benefit, and any deviation from Your will is inherently flawed! In this acceptance and surrender, we discover an invaluable substitute for the stinginess of the miserly.

As we forge a deep connection with You and seek refuge in Your boundless generosity, embracing Your divine decree with contentment, why should we venture into the realm of miserly souls who would inevitably obstruct our path? Nay, we shall bid farewell to any scholarship or financial aid that demands a compromise of our faith or values. Instead, let us dedicate our journey to seeking solace in Your benevolence and surrendering to Your divine wisdom.

The expansion and openness we encounter are the fruits of our earnest supplications to the Divine and our contentment with His decree

Beyond this, an expanse of blessings is reserved exclusively for us, distinct from the confines of the arrogant and self-absorbed. Were we incapable of seeking refuge in Your boundless generosity and kindness, and if submission to Your divine plan eluded us, what recourse would we have? We would be left with no option but to turn to miserly individuals seeking sustenance for our needs. We would be forced to plead before arrogant and self-absorbed souls, seeking solace in their limited grasp. We would be compelled to seek refuge in those consumed by greed, whose desires extend only to themselves. In such a scenario, we would inevitably find ourselves empty-handed.

Yet, in Your unparalleled benevolence, You would never relegate us to the confines of such scarcity. Instead, You have opened up many possibilities, a realm of openness and unfettered fulfillment. Therefore, instead of seeking solace in the miserly and self-absorbed, we turn to You, our Divine Source, where actual expansion and boundless blessings await.

Oh, humanity, why do you embark on a path that leads to emptiness when a path so expansive lies before you? Why do you venture down a treacherous road that can only bring disaster? Instead, embrace the path so wide and open, for it is there that proper expansion and contentment reside.

The path to God is near for those who are unburdened

و أنّ الرّاحل إليک قريب المسافة.
و أعلم أنّک... و أنّ الرّاحل ...

O Lord, I understand that the true traveler has mounted their soul and embarked on a journey towards Your divine sanctuary. The nafs or ego, equipped with intention, traverses the barren desert of worldly desires, seeking an encounter with You. Empowered by spiritual discipline, nurtured by education, and guided by the principles of Sharia, it embarks on an arduous yet enriching pilgrimage to reunite with the Divine.

Those who embark on the journey towards Your divine embrace find themselves traversing a distance less vast than it might seem. They approach You with an immediacy that defies delay. Their proximity surpasses even the fleeting blink of an eye.

از تو تا مقصود چندان منزلی در پیش نیست   یک قدم بر هر دو عالم نه که گامی بیش نیست.[87]

No distant road your yearning heart must roam,
A single stride can bring you swiftly home.
Two worlds divide, yet with a step so bold,
You'll pierce the veil, a story yet untold.

Embark on a single stride, and you shall traverse two realms! Yet, we hesitate to take this pivotal step, finding it daunting. Nay, dear seeker, dare to take that step. It is not arduous, for it is but a single, solitary stride! The path to the Divine lies closer than you may perceive. It leads not to fleeting worldly pleasures or desires that enslave the ego (nafs). It is not a path of self-aggrandizement through spiritual pursuits. Those who yearn for Your embrace must shed the extraneous and burdensome attachments that burden them.

نَجا المُخَفَّفون.[88]

The crux of salvation lies in lightening the soul. Those who can shed the weight of material and spiritual burdens are destined for salvation. When tumultuous storms arise, like earthquakes or floods, those who carry only a blanket and a jug can swiftly escape the onslaught. In contrast, those enchained by their gold safes are

rendered immobile, their hearts tethered to the glittering trinkets within. The destruction of Mount Abu Qubais would pale in comparison to the effort required to sever their attachment to these self-made gods enshrined in their safes. Hence, the flood sweeps them away, the earthquake topples them, and calamities engulf them. Yet, the one who has embraced a life of simplicity and lightness will reach their true destination.

The Story of Salman Farsi and the Hadith "Those Who Travel Light Will Be Saved"

Salman al-Farisi, upon assuming the governorship of Mada'in, chose to reside not in the wealthy governor's mansion but in a humble dwelling. His few modest possessions, a pot and a single jug, represent his worldly wealth. His knowledge, deeply embedded within his being, rendered the need for books or a library superfluous. His wisdom and insight had become his sole companions. He carried no walking stick, shoes, or extraneous items to weigh him down. His eyes, keen and unburdened by the frailty that often afflicts us, required no glasses or cases, let alone two pairs, one for close reading and one for distant vision.

One day, Mada'in faced a catastrophic event: a raging fire that engulfed the city. Amidst the chaos and unrest, Salman emerged from his abode, calmly traversing the path of escape. As he navigated the fiery inferno, he uttered, ' نجا المخفّفون, Naja al-mukhaffafun,' a phrase that resonates with spiritual wisdom: 'Those who are light-hearted have it very easy!' In one hand, he carried his jug and basin, his sole possessions, while the other grasped his blanket, his refuge from the flames.[89]

Those who embrace simplicity and detachment from worldly possessions find the path to divine communion remarkably effortless. Unlike those weighed down by material desires and earthly concerns, they can traverse the spiritual landscape with grace and ease.

Evil deeds and desires are a veil between God and His creatures

و أنّکَ لا تَحتجِبُ عن خَلقِک.

And I know that You, O Lord, are not hidden from Your servants and creatures. You are not veiled so that Your servants cannot comprehend You.

إلاّ أن تَحجُبَهُمُ الأعمالُ دونَک.[90]

Their actions or desires veil people, cover their eyes of insight, and put them in a sheath.

The veil of worldly desires and harmful actions obscures their vision, preventing them from grasping Your infinite truth. Why does humanity fail to perceive God's presence? Is God absent? God is ever-present, His essence exceeding all else. Can He be hidden behind a veil? Nay, for His manifestation surpasses that of any being, and the existence of every entity stems from His divine expression. The light, the very essence of manifestation, emanates from Him alone. Why is His divine illumination not perceived? Alas, it is because the human eye is blind!

In recounting the tale of a humble cobbler named Akbar, Hajj Hadi Abari, a revered figure in the community, imparted wisdom that challenges conventional understandings of spiritual enlightenment. Though burdened by poverty, Akbar possessed a robust faith and a deep connection with the divine.

One day, a renowned scholar and the Imam of the local mosque, skeptical of the notion of witnessing God, visited Akbar's humble abode. He posed a perplexing question: How can mortals, limited by their physical senses, claim to perceive the divine? Akbar, unfazed by the scholar's skepticism, responded: These eyes of yours are fragile glass; if it were not so, you would have perceived God's essence.[91]

The manifestation of God with the existence of egoism is a rational impossibility

The ego, which proclaims "I," is the primary veil between the servant and God. However, this ego is illusory, a mere fabrication of the mind. This ego must be discarded to attain spiritual awakening, for it obstructs our perception of the divine presence. As long as this ego and its attendant delusions persist, the possibility of experiencing God remains elusive.

If one can shed the ego early in life, it's a blessing, but if not, it will trap him until the end of his life, preventing him from making even the slightest progress.

معنی درویش اگر خواهی کمال نیستی است هر که را هستی خود باقی است او درویش نیست.[92]

The dervish's heart, a perfect, empty cup,
No trace of self, love's essence fills it up.
For those who cling to ego's fleeting hold,
The path to dervish hood remains untold.

Dervish signifies a state of absolute poverty toward God—an individual who has relinquished self-existence, transcended ego, and wholeheartedly surrendered to the divine will. As long as the being persists, God remains veiled, and manifestation remains elusive. As long as humanity remains self-absorbed,

attributing all achievements to their agency and pursuing material gains, the divine presence remains obscured. However, God emerges radiantly when this paradigm is reversed, the self is dissolved, and the pursuit of self-aggrandizement is abandoned.

A subtle metaphor for the need to strengthen and discipline the self

The sun's radiant light illuminates the sky, yet we often fail to perceive its brilliance directly. This is not due to any obstruction on the sun's part; the sun's magnificence is freely accessible to all. Our inability to fully grasp its essence stems from the limitations of our vision.

The veil that hinders our spiritual perception lies within us, not within the divine presence. There is no barrier between us and God, but our actions and desires have created a shroud of darkness, obscuring our spiritual sight.

و أنَّ الرّاحِلَ إليک قریبُ المسافة.

The path is near, and you, God, are not veiled from your creation. Like a veil, our desires obscure your radiant presence, but when these desires dissipate, your presence becomes readily apparent.

و قد قصدتُ إلیک بطلبتی و توجّهتُ إلیک بحاجتی و جعلتُ بکَ استغاثتی، و بدعائک توسّلی من غیرِ استحقاقٍ لاستماعِکَ منّی و لا استیجابٍ لعفوکَ عنّی، بل لثقتی بکرَمکَ و سکونی إلیٰ صدقِ وَعدکَ و لجئی إلی الإیمانِ بتوحیدکَ و یقینی بمعرفتکَ منّی أن لا ربّ لی غیرُکَ و لا إلهَ إلاّ أنتَ وحدکَ لا شریکَ لکَ.

I come before You with my request, turning to You in my time of need. I raise my supplication and prayer to You, knowing I am undeserving of Your ear or forgiveness. Yet, I approach You with faith in Your boundless generosity. I find peace in the truth of Your promises and seek refuge in the steadfast belief in Your oneness. With absolute certainty, I acknowledge You as my sole Lord and God, with no partners to share Your divine power.

My need for you compels me to seek your presence and guidance. I recognize my inherent dependence on your support, which has led me to turn toward you with humility and earnest supplication. Cognizant that the fulfillment of my needs lies solely in your hands, I have relinquished the futile pursuit of aid from any source other than you. With genuine faith, I trust entirely your benevolent intervention, knowing that you are the sole source of strength and solace.

جعلتُ بکَ استغاثتی.

I have placed my plea for assistance solely upon you!

With a whole heart, I turn to You in supplication. I entreat Your mercy, recite Your holy words, and pour my tears in Your sacred presence. You are my sole refuge, my only source of solace. Through Your divine guidance, I find sanctuary. My pleas are directed solely towards Your intercession, for You are the answer to my prayers, not any other.

وَ بِدُعائِکَ دَونَکَ لی.

Through the benevolence of Your Grace, You graciously receive my supplications and extend Your forgiveness. I have never strayed from Your path, nor have I sought solace in the company of any other divine entity. Every invocation I have uttered has been directed towards Your benevolent presence. Though I am undeserving of such divine favor, I implore You to heed my pleas and grant me the opportunity to seek refuge in Your prayerful guidance.

مِن غَیرِ استِحقاقٍ لِاستِماعِکَ مِنّی.

I dared not presume to demand your attention, to compel you to hear my plea.

What obligation is there for you to listen to my request? It is your grace that you hear!

وَ لا استیجابٍ لِعَفوِکَ عَنّی.

I do not possess the merit to compel your forgiveness of my transgressions.

The Exalted God, I humbly ask for your forgiveness. I acknowledge that I am not inherently worthy of your pardon, nor can I demand it from you. My prayer is not a plea made with entitlement, nor do I believe that simply uttering these words compels you to grant me absolution. I do not seek forgiveness based on any merit I possess.

بَل لِثِقَتی بِکَرَمِکَ.

I trust in your grace; my heart is calm and convictional about this matter!

وَ سُکونی إلیٰ صِدقِ وَعدِکَ.

And I am calm in the face of the truth of your promise.

O Lord, You have pledged to answer my supplications, "Ask Me, and I shall respond. Call upon Me, and I shall heed your call. I shall fulfill the needs of people in need. Ask Me." These are Your words, Your promises. I harbor no skepticism in the veracity of these utterances; had I entertained doubt, I would not have invoked Your name.

Some individuals seek aid from divine and worldly sources, turning to God only after their efforts with others have proved futile. Desperate, others seek

compromise, petitioning God and lesser entities, hoping that someone else will intervene if God remains unresponsive. All these actions stem from a lack of faith and a failure to embrace God's promise fully.

I, however, did not succumb to such doubts. I approached You directly, unburdening my heart and trusting Your infinite wisdom and compassion. For I know that You are the ultimate source of all blessings, the fount of all mercy.

لسکونی إلیٰ صدقِ وعدِک.

My heart found solace in the face of your words' integrity and your promise's steadfastness. No longer did it waver or oscillate; it was serene, assured in the truthfulness of your every vow.

Belief in the oneness of God is the prelude to asking Him

و لَجَئنی إلی الایمانِ بتوحیدِک.

Driven to the precipice of faith, I beheld the closure of all paths, realizing that the only refuge lies in Your oneness.

لیس ماوراء عَبّادان قریة".[93]
لَجَئنی إلی الایمانِ بتوحیدِک.

Driven to the precipice of faith, I beheld the closure of all paths, realizing that only in Your oneness lies the sole refuge. I was forced to believe that you are the only one.

Your essence is indivisible, Your attributes are consistent, and Your actions are unified! Throughout the vastness of existence, every event is Your creation, and no facet of creation escapes Your boundless will, knowledge, and power. Upon comprehending this truth, I was left with no alternative but to embrace the absolute sovereignty of Your existence, acknowledging that You are the sole repository of all might and that there is no power besides You.

و یقینی بمعرفتِک منّی أن لا ربَّ لی غیرُک .

With firm conviction, You possess complete knowledge of me and my current situation. You see me for who I truly am, and I wholeheartedly acknowledge You as my sole deity. I recognize that all exalted attributes and divine names belong solely to You, and no other being is worthy of such reverence. Additionally, I am confident that You understand my trust, for there is no God for me but You.

لا إله إلاّ أنت.

There is no God or deity except You.

وحدَک لا شریکَ لک.

And You are the sole entity, the Supreme Lord, the self-sufficient, and all attributes reside within You! "وحدَک" signifies Your absolute oneness!

So great is Your unity, and with such monotheism, no being can oppose or defy Your holy essence! Your unity has confounded, concealed, and darkened all beings! No partner shares Your divinity; in your existence, You have no ally. Your power alone governs all actions. O God, we affirm the truth of these words we speak. I am confident, and my heart is at peace with this knowledge. Therefore, I present my supplications to You. What are my demands?

اللّهُمَّ أنتَ القائلُ ...[94]

Let us now delve into the requests of the Imam as he engages in intimate communion with God. Before approaching Him with our supplications, we must grasp His essence and the boundless reach of His power. The introductory passages unveil God's grandeur, enabling us to approach Him with solid conviction and confidence in His ability to grant our requests, no matter how daunting they seem.

و هو علیک سهلٌ یسیر.[95]

By God's grace, may we one day attain the level of understanding and devotion that enables us to comprehend the supplications of Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him). May our needs and desires align with the pure essence of God's will. May He sever our attachment to all that lies beyond His boundless presence. May He guide our outward and inward gaze towards the radiant splendor of His divine station.

بِمحمّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرینَ و صلِّ علیٰ محمّدٍ و آلهِ أجمعینَ.

By Muhammad and his pure family, and may God bless Muhammad and his family.

Session five: Knowledge and love of God is the reason for human happiness and salvation

أعوذ بالله من الشّيطان الرّجيم
بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم
و صلّى اللهُ علىٰ خيرِ خلقِه و أشرفِ بريّتِه محمّدٍ و آلِه الطيّبين الطّاهرين
و لعنةُ الله علىٰ أعدائهم أجمعين

اللهمّ أنت القائلُ و قولُك حقٌّ و وعدُك صدقٌ: (وَسْئَلُوا ٱللَّهَ مِن فَضْلِهِۦٓ)،[96] (إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا).[97] و ليس من صفاتِك يا سيّدي أن تأمُرَ بالسّؤال و تمنعَ العطيّةَ و أنت المنّانُ بالعطيّاتِ علىٰ أهلِ مملكتِك و العائدُ عليهم بتحنّنِ رأفتِك.

The Exalted God. Your words are valid, and Your promises never fail. In the Holy Quran, You instruct us: "Call upon Allah for His bounty and ask Him to increase it upon you."

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا.

My Lord, your mercy extends to all creation. It is not in Your nature to command people to ask and then withhold Your gift after requesting it. Your nature is one of generosity and compassion. You bless all creation, and Your love and care for Your creatures are infinite.

The meaning of the truth

The concept of divinity often includes the idea of absolute truth. Proponents argue that divine declarations are inherently verifiable because they correspond to an objective reality. In contrast, falsehood is considered the product of human imagination, lacking any grounding in the external world.

O God, your pronouncements are ontologically true. This signifies a perfect alignment between your divine pronouncements and the nature of reality itself. There exists no gap between the essence of this reality and its actualization.

إِنَّمَآ أَمْرُهُۥٓ إِذَآ أَرَادَ شَيْـًٔا أَن يَقُولَ لَهُۥ كُن فَيَكُونُ.[98]

His command is only when He intends something and says to it, 'Be!' and it is.

In Islamic theology, divine creation emphasizes God's absolute power. When He wills something into existence, He utters the command "Kun" (كُن), meaning "Be!" This utterance is not merely a spoken word but the embodiment of God's will.

The act of willingness and creation are the same, with no temporal or conceptual separation. Therefore, God's will and word are understood to be the direct cause of external existence and its manifestation, eliminating any intermediary steps or delays.

The Divine words are inherently truthful, reflecting the very essence of reality and the external world. O God, Your promises are genuinely authentic, never failing to materialize. You refrain from making promises flippantly, only to renege on them later. Your Holy Quran states: "Verily, Allah does not break His promise."

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ ٱلْمِيعَادَ.[99]

You condemn those who betray their promises, yet you praise the integrity of your prophet, Ismail, proclaiming: "Indeed, he was a man of truth in his promise."

إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ صَادِقَ ٱلْوَعْدِ.[100]

The Exalted God, Your promises are immutable. Unlike mortals who make commitments rashly without considering the potential consequences, You are ever faithful. Those who break their word do so out of a lack of foresight, finding themselves entangled in situations that prevent them from fulfilling their pledges. This inevitably leads to remorse and regret as they question their hasty decisions and lament, "Why did I make such a promise without thinking?" Such is the folly of breaking one's word.

Individuals make promises and then face unanticipated obstacles that hinder their fulfillment. In such situations, they may lack the power to overcome these impediments, rendering them unable to adhere to their commitment. Additionally, there are instances where people make promises only to discover that keeping them would put them at a disadvantage. For example, they may ask themselves, 'If I uphold my promise, I will incur a loss. Therefore, I will refrain from fulfilling it to escape that setback.'

God's immutability

God's actions are not predicated upon deliberation, contemplation, reflection, prudence, or careful consideration. Moreover, God's knowledge is not *ḥuṣūlī* (acquired knowledge), where the forms of external beings are etched in His mind, enabling Him to compare them and evaluate their merits or defects. His knowledge is *ḥuḍūrī* (immediate and direct intuitive knowledge) permeating all existence. Additionally, no external force can thwart God's promises.

إنَّ الله هو القاهرُ؛ إنَّ الله هو الغالبُ.
وَهُوَ ٱلْوَٰحِدُ ٱلْقَهَّٰرُ.[101]

God is the Exalted, the Victorious, the One and Only, and the Omnipotent. No external entity can impede God's decree. Through His *Qahhār* (The One who

prevails over all creation) and *Jabbār* (whatever He decrees will come to pass without fail) Names, God subjugates and subdues all beings to His will. Consequently, His promises reign supreme, impervious to any entity's interference.

Furthermore, God's existence is boundless, devoid of shortcomings, and He derives no benefit from His promises. Hence, it is inconceivable that God would make a promise and renege upon it. His promises are absolute truths, reflecting His flawless and uncompromised nature.

O God, You have proclaimed the integrity of Your words and the sincerity of Your promises. This means that the assurances You have granted are trustworthy, and this utterance of Yours is equally valid. Your Prophet, who has imparted this knowledge to us, has spoken following the truth. These words emanate from You:

وَسْئَلُوا اللَّهَ مِن فَضْلِهِ،[102] إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا.[103]

'Seek from God His bounty.' 'God is indeed merciful toward you.' This implies that God is compassionate, loving, and benevolent towards you. He has beckoned you to implore Him and seek His blessings. God will grant your supplications.

The addition of two premises to avoid the breach of God's promise

The following two premises are joined together: The integrity of the divine utterance implies that we accept as absolute truth that the statement, "Ask God, and God will give you," originated from You and remains Your promise. The second premise is the nature of God's response as we now consider whether You fulfill this promise unconditionally or if external factors might prevent You from granting every request. In simpler terms, We believe the message "Ask God, and God will give you" is true and comes from You. However, do you always grant requests made according to this promise, or could there be other reasons why a request might not be fulfilled?

و ليسَ من صفاتِک يا سَيِّدی ان تأمُرَ بالسؤال، و تمنَعَ العطيّة.

It is not within Your nature, O my Lord, to say, 'Come to Me, ask of Me, and I will give you!' and then not give. How could it be so?

و انت المنّانُ بالعطيّاتِ علیٰ أهل مملكتک.

You distribute your gifts abundantly and pour them on all the people who live in your kingdom and government, which is under your power and dominion.

The meaning of " مِلک, milk" and " مُلک, mulk" and the difference between the two

"مِلک, Milk" means "to be in control of something" that a person possesses. "مُلک, Mulk" means "to be in charge of something and to have the authority to do something with it." Something may not belong to a person, but the options for its disposal are in the hands of the person. In this case, we don't say "the person is the owner" or mālik; we say "the person is the malik or "the ruler and the one who has the authority." O God, all beings are under your mulk, and you are the malik over them, the one who has authority over them. You bestow your grace abundantly on these beings who are all under your mulk, and you have mercy on them and provide for them.

بِتَحَنُّنِ رافَتِکَ (أی بِتَرَحُّمِ رافَتِکَ).

With the compassion of Your mercy or with the tenderness of Your mercy.

All people receive His blessings

This is a universal principle: all individuals within your dominion receive your generosity. I, too, am among those who reside in your kingdom! You fashioned me. Thus, I am one of the beings who inhabit your realm and governance. I am not exempt from this universal principle. Your pronouncements are authentic; your pledges are genuine. You do not command supplication and withhold bestowal. Your benevolence extends to all subjects within your kingdom, imbuing all with its radiance. I, too, am among those who dwell within your kingdom, shaped by your compassionate hand and nurtured in my youth until I attained maturity and perfection.

إلهی رَبَّیتَنی فی نِعَمِکَ و إحسانِکَ صَغیراً، و نَوَّهتَ بِاسمی کَبیراً.

O God, amidst Your boundless blessings, grace, and generosity, You nurtured me when I was small and insignificant, a mere speck of existence, a sperm cell within my mother's womb. With Your compassionate hand, You guided my growth, planning the harmonious interplay of my states and qualities. Through the transformative power of Your mercy, You led me from one phase to the next until the dawn of adulthood eclipsed my time of smallness. You have exalted my name in adulthood, raising it to prominence and recognition. You have honored my name, placing it upon a pedestal of esteem. This is your way of celebrating human beings.

فَیا مَن رَبّانی فی الدُّنیا بِإحسانِهِ و تَفَضُّلِهِ [بِفَضلِهِ] و نِعَمِهِ، و أشارَ لی فی الآخِرَةِ
إلیٰ عَفوِهِ و کَرَمِهِ. مَعرِفَتی یا مَولایَ دَلیلی [دَلَّتنی] عَلَیکَ، و حُبّی لَکَ شَفیعی إلَیکَ، و
أنا واثِقٌ مِن دَلیلی بِدَلالَتِکَ و ساکِنٌ مِن شَفیعی إلیٰ شَفاعَتِکَ.

Therefore, I, too, am subject to the universal rule, standing before Your merciful gaze that encompasses all within Your kingdom. I acknowledge that through the bountiful gifts You bestow upon Your people, You have nurtured me from my insignificance during the development of these states and the cultivation of my character. You have raised me and nourished me until I reached a position of prominence. You have elevated my name and reputation and called me to serve You.

Oh God, You have showered me with Your kindness, generosity, and countless blessings throughout my life. In the hereafter, You promise truth and grace. You have alluded to embracing me with Your forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Thus, You have ensured my well-being in both this life and the eternal one.

Knowledge is man's guide to God; love is man's intercessor to God.

معرفتی یا مولای دلیلی علیک.

My knowledge of You, O my Master, is my guide to You.

و حبّی لک شفیعی إلیک .

And my love for You is my intercessor to You.

Divine source, I possess but two things, and they are all I require: Love for you and a deepening understanding of your essence. I am compelled to acknowledge Your existence through these appellations. Your words resonate with truth, and Your promises inspire faith in me. Your benevolence extends to all inhabitants of Your domain, as evidenced by the countless blessings You have bestowed upon me. From childhood to adulthood, I have flourished under Your nurturing guidance. This understanding of Your essence is the culmination of accumulated knowledge. Through recognition, I have grasped the inherent nature of these attributes and their effects on Your being.

Divine being, my initial approach to you stemmed from my knowledge of your existence. However, having gained a deeper understanding, this knowledge now serves as my compass and the impetus for seeking your assistance. Yet, I am still determining the grounds for requesting your aid.

In human interactions, supplicants often employ greetings, gifts, or the intervention of trusted associates to secure a favorable outcome. Now, having come to know you, and with that knowledge guiding my steps toward you, what offers can I present as a foundation for my plea? I can only profess my love for you. This, along with my newfound knowledge, is what I possess. I acknowledge

you, and with that acknowledgment comes an ardent devotion. Beyond these two elements, I have nothing. Yet, from knowledge springs my direction, and from love blossoms my intercession.

The term "intercessor" signifies a supporter or advocate who comes to assist an individual who is incapable of accomplishing a task independently.[104] " *shafi'*-intercessor" is derived from "*shafe'*," which means a pair. When an individual encounters an impediment they cannot surmount alone, they may seek the assistance of another party, who becomes their intercessor. For example, if someone is attempting to lift a heavy object beyond their capacity, they might request the help of another person, essentially saying, "Let's collaborate to lift this object." Similarly, if a single horse lacks the power to pull a carriage, a second horse might be added as an intercessor to assist the first horse in drawing the load.

Humanity's work is incomplete without love, despite knowledge

The Exalted God, while my intellectual grasp of You illuminates the path to a deeper connection, my genuine love bridges the gap and pleads my case. Though I humbly petition You, I acknowledge my limitations. Even a great understanding of Your nature cannot guarantee the fulfillment of my desires.

Just as a dish is incomplete and unappetizing without a vital ingredient, mere intellectual knowledge of God is insufficient! Even Satan possessed such knowledge, yet he failed to attain spiritual sainthood (*wilaya*). Love is the very essence and foundation of Wilaya.

Many claim familiarity with the ruler's authority. However, true understanding belongs to those who have directly experienced its severity. Those who have endured the ruler's oppression, the confiscation of their possessions, the sting of the whip, and the confines of imprisonment –possess an intimate knowledge of the ruler's power. Their firsthand experience with the ruler's harshness, culminating in their imprisonment, has brought them face-to-face with the true nature of his power.

Who, then, finds genuine fulfillment in their service? It is the one whose heart overflows with love for the ruler, a love that transcends mere intellectual understanding.

A dynamic of mutual love is established through the fundamental principles of reciprocity and necessity: 'He loves them, and they love Him.' This two-way exchange ensures that those who cherish the ruler receive his affection. By removing the veil (a necessary step to attain his love), they enter a realm where

torture, torment, and imprisonment lose all meaning. Instead, they find tranquility, bathed in the radiant manifestations of the ruler's magnificence.

Therefore, love is indispensable for fulfilling our aspirations. In truth, without love's embrace, the aspiring soul cannot traverse the celestial expanse of divine knowledge; its solitary wing renders it incapable of flight. To soar through this ethereal realm requires two wings: knowledge, the bedrock of understanding, and love, the propelling force of connection. Therefore, my love for You is my intercessor, and my journey is complete.

The Acquisition of Human Knowledge of God through God Himself

و أنا واثقٌ من دليلي بِدَلالتِک، و ساكنٌ من شفيعي إلى شفاعتک .

My understanding of You, Divine One, is not a product of my faculties. If it were, You might say, 'This understanding you've found within Me, you've discovered it on your own; it belongs to you, and what is yours holds no value. Return it to Me!' In light of this, what can we truly offer You?

Our knowledge of You is gleaned from Your thoughts, labors, suffering, and self-imposed hardships. These are all Yours! Similarly, the love I feel for You – if it originated within myself, You would again say, 'The love you offer on your terms is useless to Us! You accept neither the wisdom We impart nor the affection We inspire.'

I have come to recognize a truth: my confidence in this evidence stems from your guidance. The knowledge I possess, which leads me to you and confirms your presence, arises not from my faculties but yours. Your guidance has enveloped me, and this knowledge has become a testament to you within me. It was through your approach and embrace that knowledge emerged within me. Therefore, the knowledge that has manifested is not self-generated but divinely bestowed. You willed it, and your guidance has drawn me closer to you.

و ساكنٌ من شفيعي إلى شفاعتک.

My heart finds solace and tranquility in the intercessor I possess. This intercessor is love, and you, O Lord, would not turn away its intercession, saying, 'I do not accept the pleas of this intercessor!' You, Yourself, have cultivated this intercessor for me, embedding the seed of love in my heart. How could you then deny its presence?

Were we to have planted this seed of love ourselves, and the fruit that sprouted from it lacked sweetness, you would have declared, 'I do not accept this cantaloupe, the product of this seed. It is not pleasing to my palate!' Yet, this is a

seed sown by your hand. How can you refute something that you have nurtured? Impossibilities have no place in your realm. Therefore, my heart is at peace, and my soul is serene, for I have brought an intercessor that transcends all others – the love I bear for you.

إلى شفاعتک.

Your intervention, support, and influence initiated a mediation process within me. This mediation, founded on principles of love and understanding, captivated my attention and guided me toward a deeper understanding.

إلهى إن لم تبتدئنى الرحمة منک بحسن التوفيق فمن السالک بى إليک فى واضح الطريق.[105]

In Du'ā Ṣabāḥ, we read: O God, if You do not initiate Your mercy towards me with good guidance, then who will guide me to You on the clear path?

Divine Providence, without your initial grace and benevolence, how could I have ever found my way to you? That first spark of inspiration, igniting a fire within my heart, set me on this clear path toward your presence.

"The color of God" is what makes a human being valuable.

No matter how impressive, many virtues and accomplishments cannot unlock the divine realm. God proclaims: I seek a shattered heart, that is, utter annihilation. I am the Absolute Existence, and My absoluteness does not harmonize with other existences. I desire nothingness, for it aligns with existence. Hence, if the essence and color that man has absorbed into his being, perfection, knowledge, fear, asceticism, and all else, stems from My favor, it holds value.

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ.[106]

Only those who have attained a state of divine grace hold actual value in the spiritual realm. Those lacking the divine quality are deemed unfit regardless of their other virtues. A transformation is necessary, and they will be instructed: "You have adorned yourself with worldly attributes, but here, such embellishments are irrelevant. Shed these colors and remain where you currently reside, for this place is not for you.

Have you noticed the nuanced approach Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) takes on this subject? He opens with remarkable humility and gentleness, stating, "O God, the task is complete. I possess no inherent knowledge or love; these are merely gifts granted by You. I am but a supplicant devoid of any intrinsic merit.

We are beggars in His presence, holding no claim to merit or accomplishment. A beggar approaches with empty hands, seeking sustenance from another. But suppose one harbors an inflated sense of self-importance, claiming ownership over their possessions. In that case, they are no longer a humble seeker but a conceited claimant – and claimants face rebuke and rebuff.

The Necessity of Turning to God with the Knowledge and Love that He Has Given to Humans

ادعوک یا سیّدی بلسانٍ قد أخرسه ذنبُه؛ ربِّ أُناجیک بقلبٍ قد أوبقه جرمُه.

O God! Now I have come to speak to You and tell You my needs, and I have known You well; first, I described those qualities for You.

الحمدُ للّه الّذی تَحبّبَ إلیَّ و هو غنیٌّ عنّی، الحمدُ للّه الّذی یَحلُم عنّی حتّی کأنّی لا ذنبَ لی.[107]

Directing all these levels of praise and gratitude solely to Your Essence is for this reason: You may perceive that I comprehend who You are! All powers, perfections, and beauties reside in You.

The Exalted God, all of this is true! I understand that even those who approach You before fulfilling Your decree, content with their actions, can still find Your door open through supplication to Your generosity and mercy. This is a door available to all. Those who appreciate You are considered close to You, and You will swiftly guide them to their destination.

I, too, come before You with a need. I have appealed to You and resorted to prayer, fully aware of my unworthiness to be heard. I possess no right or justification to compel forgiveness. Yet, I trust in Your grace. My heart finds peace in the truth of Your promise, leading me to a solid trust in Your oneness. I am confident that You, the One and Only, are my Lord.

With this newfound understanding, O God, I recognize the absolute truth of Your words, the sincerity of Your promises, Your boundless generosity, and Your steady commitment. You nourish and nurture all creation within the hand of Your mercy.

You have showered me with countless favors and blessings from infancy to now. You have granted me many gifts in this world, and I pray for Your continued forgiveness and generosity in the hereafter.

O God! I am also impoverished, devoid of all worldly possessions! My sole wealth lies in knowing that You are the Exalted, the Giver of all gifts, and that all existence emanates from Your grace. This knowledge is incontrovertible, an

undeniable truth. Another irrefutable truth is the existence of love emanating from You, not from me. With this knowledge and love instilled in my heart by Your divine grace, I humbly approach You, bearing questions and requests. Listen attentively to my words, O Lord:

أدعوک يا سيّدی بلسان، قد أخرسه ذنبه.

Most merciful God, I humbly plead with You (I pray) despite my shortcomings. My transgressions weigh heavy on me, and sins render my tongue mute.

ربّ أناجيک بقلب، قد أوبقه جرمه. أوبق يوبق: ای اهلک؛ ربّ: ای ربّی.

O God! I converse with You in whispers, commune with You in heartfelt sincerity, and confide in You with a heart ravaged and corrupted by the weight of its transgressions.

O God! I possess a tongue, but the burden of my sins has stifled its eloquence. I possess a heart, the seat of my thoughts and contemplations, yet it has been so deeply marred by my wrongdoings that it has ceased functioning as a beacon of goodness. There remains no vestige of its former purity!

أدعوک يا ربّ راهبًا راغبًا راجيًا خائفًا! إذا رأيت مولای ذنوبی فزعت، و إذا رأيت كرمک طمعت!

Therefore, I, who have come before You, possess no worldly riches, acts of worship, intellectual attainments, asceticism, or piety—nothing at all! This bag I bear containing my offerings to You is empty. The knowledge and love that I have are Your gifts, not mine. What I bring from myself is a legacy of sin, the silence of a tongue burdened by wrongdoing, and a heart ravaged by transgressions. What can we bring before You except shame and humiliation?

O God! I call upon You as a "راهبًا راغبًا, *rāhibān raghibā*," one who is both fearful and desirous. I am afraid because You are great, glorious, and possessor of majesty and grandeur. You are powerful and have dominion. Your power is such that it leaves no effect on all beings. You are such a capable Lord! Who can stand before this power and not be filled with awe and fear?

In contrast, I yearn for You. In the presence of those attributes and names that You possess – kindness, tenderness, mercy, compassion, love, and forgiveness – You behold sin and yet pardon it. You are magnanimous, refusing to show my offenses. With a mere inclination towards an individual, You absolve them of all their transgressions. You exhibit such nobility and grandeur.

Indeed, in light of these considerations, I am drawn to You with a newfound enthusiasm. This longing compels me to approach You and articulate my heartfelt desires.

راجيًا خائفًا .

My desire for You ignites within me a hope, a beacon of anticipation that guides my path toward You. Yet, concurrently, I stand in awe of Your boundless power, a humbling reverence that permeates my being. In this paradoxical thought between desire and awe, hope and fear, I am perpetually captivated by the exquisite beauty and majesty that radiate from Your essence.

تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ.[108]

Exalted is the name of your Lord, the Possessor of Majesty and Honor.

إذا رأيتُ مولایَ ذنوبی فَزِعتُ، و إذا رأيتُ كَرمَک طَمِعتُ!

Overwhelmed by the gravity of my transgressions, O my Lord, O my Master, I tremble in fear. Yet, when I behold the boundless expanse of Your benevolence, I am filled with hope.

Neither my yearning nor my apprehension is unfounded. None of them! Neither my optimism nor my trepidation is without basis. My fear and dread stem from my transgressions against You, the Holy and Majestic Essence. Should You hold me accountable for even the slightest sin, what would remain of me? He will declare: 'You, a mere creation, dared to defy My Holy, Omnipotent, Eternal, Everlasting, and Ever-Present Essence.' Against whom did you rebel? A peer of your kind and stature, or did you dare defy Me?

If you hold me accountable for a minor transgression, an outcry of terror, lament, and tears will erupt, a cacophony of voices pleading, 'O God, do not do this!' Yet, I behold the immensity of Your grace.

There once lived a man who, yearning for water, tirelessly dug a well in his home, wielding a pickaxe and hammer, yet to no avail. The well's depths yielded but a single, meager drop of water. Seeking solace, he ventured to the river, then the sea, and traversed the vast Atlantic Ocean, eventually reaching the boundless expanse of the Pacific Ocean. There, on an endless horizon of water, land vanished into the depths. Just how much water does this vast ocean contain? Only God knows the answer. Embark on a journey to the heart of the Pacific and witness it firsthand: the ocean stretches from the North Pole to the South Pole, encompassing half the globe. Its depths remain shrouded in mystery, reaching unfathomable

heights of ten thousand, twenty thousand, even a hundred thousand meters or more. This boundless reservoir is a testament to God's infinite mercy and compassion. When enveloped by His grace, all traces of *shirk* (associating partners with God), sin, and heresy vanish, and an expanse of purity and enlightenment will remain.

A Beautiful Metaphor for the Erasure of Sin through God's Mercy

Picture a desert inhabited for an extended period and its pristine beauty marred by the accumulation of human-generated filth. The sun's searing rays exacerbate the foulness, rendering the land uninhabitable. Yet, a benevolent cloud drifts across the sky, unleashing a torrent of cleansing rain that washes away the accumulated grime. The once-barren desert transforms into a vibrant oasis, teeming with lush greenery and radiant life. This transformative power mirrors the grace of God, capable of eradicating our sins and impurities, leaving us reborn and unburdened by the shackles of our past.

As the rain continues to cascade, the desert's original dwellings and landmarks, once ensnared in material and personal identities, vanish. These identities dissolve into God's divine essence, leaving behind an expanse of absolute existence—the very nature of the Supreme Being.

On the one hand, I look at your mercy, which is so vast and boundless, that you say: No matter how many sins you have committed, do not commit them again! Even if you have killed seventy prophets!

The Story of the Prophet's Speech to a Sinful Person

A man comes to the Prophet Muhammad and asks, "Will God forgive me for my sins, even if they are as great as the mountains or the earth?" The Prophet replies, "Yes, God will forgive you if you sincerely repent."[109]

As I contemplate my sins, those that are uniquely mine, I am struck by the irony of our self-deception. We spend our lives painstakingly filling our metaphorical bags with what we believe to be beautiful, melodious, and worthwhile treasures—like nightingales, canaries, pigeons, turtledoves, and parrots. Yet, when the time comes to present these supposed treasures to God, when we attempt to cross the threshold of Divine judgment, our bags are turned upside down, revealing the true nature of our accumulated deeds. We are faced with the shocking realization that our bags are overflowing not with the beloved creatures we imagined but with a slithering serpent soaring high into the heavens, venomous scorpions crawling out from every corner, menacing snakes slithering

from side to side, fearsome dragons glaring with sinister eyes, slithering lizards darting around, and relentless desert rats gnawing at the seams from within.

How astonishing! We once believed that this bag was brimming with exquisite treasures – nightingales, canaries, and vibrant parrots. Yet, how did this transformation take place? Nay! From the outset, it was nothing but vile refuse. Yet, man harbors such an ardent affection for his ego that he adorns every serpent and scorpion he conceals within the depths of his soul with a radiant veil, mistakenly perceiving them as nightingales or parrots.

When the sun of truth unveils its brilliance, transforming the inner self into liquid transparency, these hidden selves materialize and expose their secrets, revealing the actual contents of our pockets. Shame washes over the individual as they exclaim, 'What have I accumulated within this bag, and what am I about to present before God?' At this juncture, it becomes wiser to utter: 'O God, we renounce any claims of gathering this and that, for we do not assert that we have brought nightingales, canaries, or parrots. Yet, for the sake of Your contentment, extend Your generosity and refrain from opening this bag, exposing the serpents and scorpions within. We admit everything, so You, too, forgive us!'

The story of a desperate person who said "Ya Allah" all night long but did not hear an answer, and the message of God for him

A man called out to God from dusk till dawn, supplicating, weeping, and imploring: "O God! O God! O God! O God! O God! O God! O God!" He has yet to receive a response. As dawn approached, he went to his contemporary prophet and lamented: "Throughout the night, I cried out to God, 'O God! Here I am! O God! O God! O Lord!' Not a single response from God!" The prophet, who was about to engage in prayer, communicated: This young man expresses his concern, 'We cried out from dusk till dawn to God, 'O God!' Yet, not a single answer was forthcoming!' The following divine response reverberated: Inform this young man that we summoned you first, enabling the utterance of 'O God' to flow from your tongue! Indeed, all of the 'O God's you uttered were echoes of our voices, mirrored in the depths of your heart and resonating as 'O God' and 'O Lord!' This 'O God' of yours is akin to our resounding 'Here I am!' The 'O God' you uttered was our.'[110]

Here I am,' illuminating your heart and reverberating on your tongue as 'O God.' Your prayer, yearning, and affliction serve as our emissaries! Your requests, the hunger within you, and the ache you perceive within are our envoys dispatched from above to beckon your attention to that realm. The weeping, wailing, burning,

sighing, and moaning are manifested within you! Therefore, do not attribute this to yourself, believing that you have ignited this passion, unleashed these tears, and kindled this yearning while God remains indifferent. This enthusiasm and pain are messengers sent from the Lord to seek our assistance; they emanate from that source!

فإن عَفَوتَ فَخَيرُ راحمٍ، و إن عذّبتَ فغيرُ ظالم.

O Lord, when I contemplate my transgressions, I am seized by trepidation, and when I gaze upon Your ineffable mercy, my spirit is inundated with a surge of hope. Thus, I am trapped in a paradoxical dance of fear and aspiration, longing and apprehension.

God, if You were to extend Your benevolence and pardon my transgressions, how exquisite a pardoner You would be! How magnificent a Monarch You are! How worthy of adoration and reverence! (And it is not unprecedented, for You have bestowed boundless pardon upon countless souls, rendering this act of grace a mere relic in comparison.)

و إن عذّبتَ.

If you were to punish me for my transgressions, your actions would be just and righteous, not unjust or tyrannical. You would meet out punishment according to my rightful due as a consequence of my insolent behavior and the injustice of my sins.

حُجّتی یا الله فی جُرأتی علی مسألتِک مع إتیانِی ما تکرَهُ جودُک و کَرَمُک، و عُدّتی فی شدّتی مع قِلّةِ حیائی رأفتُک و رحمتُک، و قد رجوتُ أن لا تُخَیِّبَ بینَ ذَینِ و ذَینِ مُنیَتی فَحَقِّقْ رجائی!

My Lord, you witness my audacity to seek and pray despite the abundance of heinous deeds that should render my tongue speechless. My heart, too, has been ravaged by these transgressions, yet I find the courage to call upon you, unburdening myself of my sins. This audacity arises from your boundless generosity and compassion. You are the epitome of generosity and kindness, qualities that have instilled in me the courage to turn to you, even in the face of my shortcomings.

These tools, prerequisites, and equipment enable me to approach You and seek Your assistance with a modicum of humility despite the difficulties and distress that I am experiencing. These tools and equipment guiding me towards You are Your compassion and mercy. You are compassionate and merciful, forgiving even our most heinous transgressions, never ceasing to extend Your compassion, boundless in its reach and depth.

Given Your boundless generosity, compassion, and mercy, I cling to the hope that You will not abandon me between these fervent aspirations, for which I have cried out and lamented profusely.

In one of his supplications, Imam Sajjad proclaims, "O God, my life has elapsed, and I have invoked You throughout its entirety. How could You possibly disappoint me after all my devotion?" He says, "I fervently hope that You will not abandon me between these aspirations." These yearnings are of unparalleled grandeur! Truly exceptional!

فحَقِّق رجائی.

Let not my hope, which I cherish towards You, be rendered vain! Validate it! Infuse it with certainty! Set its seal! Affix Your signature to it! Proclaim: 'A worthy hope does you harbor, and your hope is accepted.

و اسمَع دُعائی.

Hear this request I have for you and accept it.

The superiority and goodness of God over all those who are called upon and those who are interceded with

یا خیرَ من دعاه داعٍ، و أفضلَ من رجاه راجٍ.

You are the ultimate source of invitation, surpassing all earthly authorities. While countless souls place their trust in others whose actions originate from their hands, you stand above them all in your excellence.

عَظُمَ یا سیِّدی أملی.

I harbor a yearning, an aspiration that transcends the ordinary, a dream that looms large and grand.

و ساء عملی.

My actions are flawed.

فأعطِنی مِن عفوِک بمقدارِ أملی.

I hope your forgiveness will encompass me to the extent I wish.

بِمحمّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرینَ و صلّ علیٰ محمّدٍ و آلهِ أجمعینَ.

By Muhammad and his pure family, and may God bless Muhammad and his family.

أعوذُ بالله مِنَ الشَّيطانِ الرَّجيم
بسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمنِ الرَّحيم
و صلّى اللهُ على محمّدٍ و آله الطّاهرينَ
و لَعنة الله على أعدائِهِم أجمعين

عَظُمَ يا سيِّدي أملي و ساءَ عَمَلي فأعطِني مِن عَفوِكَ بِمقدارِ أملي و لا تؤاخِذني بِأسوءِ عَمَلي، فإنّ كَرَمَكَ يَجِلُّ عَن مُجازاةِ المُذنبينَ و حِلمَكَ يكبُرُ عَن مُكافاةِ المُقصِّرين.

O, my benevolent Lord and Master, my aspirations soar high, yet my actions fall short. Therefore, shower me with your boundless forgiveness, as vast as my yearning, and grant me a reprieve from the consequences of my shortcomings.

Contrite and humbled by the weight of my transgressions, I approach Your sacred presence. Awash in shame and guilt, I stand before You, acknowledging my failings. Yet, amidst this torrent of remorse, a beacon of hope flickers within my heart. I yearn for Your boundless mercy, Your divine pardon, and I find solace in the promise of Your embrace.

You are great, generous, merciful, and mighty. Emerging from the depths of my understanding of Your boundless nature, I have anchored my hopes in You and placed my heart wholly within Your embrace. This longing has fueled an insatiable desire to meet You, to attain Your presence, and to be utterly consumed by Your divine essence. This aspiration is the very crux of my existence.

The desire to meet Allah is from Allah Himself, and the evil deeds are from us

A delightful aspiration stirred within me, an echo of Your boundless grandeur. My blessed encounter with Your divine presence compelled me to set my heart's desire, my ultimate destination. Yet, I find nothing but a trail of transgressions when I assess my merits. Therefore, with the enthusiasm of my yearning, I implore You to extend Your forgiveness to me.

All past transgressions are rendered insignificant in the depths of a yearning as weighty as the cosmos. When the desire to commune with the divine is fulfilled, the triviality of earthly misdeeds fades into oblivion.

A warped perception of God, a transgression of immense magnitude, paves the way for an onslaught of sins, an all-consuming torrent of transgression. Conversely, a heart overflowing with faith and a deeply optimistic perspective on the divine constitutes an impregnable shield against the subtle temptations of sin.[111] Just as a negative view of God invites a cascade of moral decay, a steadfast belief in divine benevolence eradicates all vestiges of wickedness.

Sin is an inherent evil that permeates every stage of human existence. As we ascend the spiritual ladder, shedding the shackles of self-absorption and egocentrism, we attain higher levels of monotheism. At this elevated station, the sins that plagued our lower selves are effortlessly extinguished, dispelled, and utterly eradicated. The boundless potency and grandeur of the station of monotheism preclude the existence of sins that plagued lower stages.[112]

Building upon this foundation, Imam petitions the divine, "Invoking the magnificence of my aspiration, I implore Your benevolence to shower me with forgiveness commensurate with the grandeur of my desire. If this aspiration finds fulfillment, it will herald a deluge of Your divine mercy, eradicating all my transgressions and imperfections. Therefore, magnanimously grant my wish, and in its wake, may my sins be utterly vanquished, leaving behind a spirit cleansed and redeemed." O God, Do not blame me for the worst of my deeds! Because,

فَإِنَّ كَرَمَكَ يَجِلُّ عَنْ مُجازاةِ الْمُذنِبِينَ وَ حِلْمَكَ يَكْبُرُ عَنْ مُكافاةِ الْمُقَصِّرِينَ.

Your generosity is too incredible to punish the sinners, and Your forbearance is too great to repay the negligent.

Our sins were not born out of arrogance, defiance, hostility, or denial of You. Instead, they arose from our ignorance. This misconduct, which was not committed as an act of rebellion against You, resulted from the nafs's temptations, the world's pride, and our preoccupation with trivial, fleeting, and material matters. These distractions have kept us from the sacred realm of nearness to You and contemplating the realm of abstractions and universals.

Recognizing our transgressions rooted in ignorance and negligence, your compassion is boundless, and your forbearance is overwhelmingly immense. Your benevolence surpasses any notion of punishment for those who have erred unknowingly. Your grace is supreme, and your endurance eclipses any desire to chastise the errant.

Those who have not waged war against You out of arrogance or enmity but who have erred and strayed due to their preoccupation with the material world, the realm of nature, and material desires have committed sins. Where is Your boundless forbearance in comparison to these shortcomings? They are no match for Your infinite mercy. That magnanimous forbearance will obliterate all transgressions.

God, the only refuge of sinners from sin

وَ أنا يا سَيِّدي عائِذٌ بِفَضْلِكَ هارِبٌ مِنكَ إلَيكَ.

O my God, O my Lord, I have taken refuge in Your grace and fled from You to You.

I find no external source of comfort or refuge within the boundless universe, neither in traditional deities nor alternative primal forces. Regardless of where the ultimate truth lies, Your presence is undeniable, and Your influence reigns supreme.

Even when I dwelled in the domain of ignorance, recklessness, and ego, leading me to transgress against You, that place was not outside the domain of Your sovereignty. Even in that state of blindness, Your existence was undeniable, Your knowledge all-encompassing, Your power absolute, and all Your attributes fully manifest.

I, who sinned in seclusion, perceived it as solitude from my perspective. Yet, from Your vantage point, it was not solitude! Your vision and presence encompass the entire cosmos. Hence, in that solitude where I transgressed, You were ever-present. Now that I am fleeing sin, I am distancing myself from You. Yet, I am turning to You, having fled from You towards You!

The hope for the promise of God regarding forgiveness

مُتَنَجِّزٌ ما وَعَدتَ مِنَ الصَّفحِ عَمَّن أحسَنَ بِكَ ظَنّاً.

And I am confident of what You have promised and said: 'I will forgive the sins of those who have good thoughts of Me.' ('صفح' means 'forgiveness and overlooking.' You promised that You would overlook those who have good thoughts of You and forgive their sins.) I am sure of this matter. I stand firm on this promise and will not waver from it. I have grasped this promise firmly.

The concept of tanjīz (تنجيز) stands in opposition to ta'līq (تعليق). Ta'līq refers to something contingent, suspended, and lacking a secure foundation. Imagine an object hanging precariously; a slight touch or a gust of wind could cause it to sway. This exemplifies ta'līq. Conversely, tanjīz signifies something firmly established, like an object securely anchored to the ground. The term muntajiz (مُتَنَجِّز) translates to "fixed" or "firmly established." In this context, it conveys

the Imam's certainty in God's promise of forgiveness for those who hold positive thoughts about Him.

The Imam is resolute in his belief. He holds firmly to this promise and will not abandon it. His conviction in God's forgiveness stems from his positive perception of the Divine.

The Testimony of the Organs and Limbs of Man on the Day of Judgment

In a divine verse within Surah Fusilat, it is proclaimed that when individuals are ushered into the arena of ultimate reckoning, rendered utterly powerless, their hands, feet, limbs, skin, eyes, and so forth will bear witness to the deeds that humanity has committed.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ.[113]

When they arrive at it, their hearing, sight, and skin will testify against them for what they used to do.

وَقَالُوا لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ□.[114]

In that hallowed realm, humanity turns towards their hands, feet, eyes, and skin, bewildered, and exclaims, "You, my inextricable parts, why do you bear witness against me?" Oh, my hand, my eye, my skin, why do you testify against yourselves?" Their limbs and organs respond, "The Lord has granted us utterance, the ability to speak; He is the One who imbued all creation with the power of speech."

□ In that place, everything speaks and reveals the secrets and hidden things with eloquent tongues. A speech is heard from on high.

وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَن يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ وَلَٰكِن ظَنَنتُمْ
أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا□ا مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ وَذَٰلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِي ظَنَنتُم بِرَبِّكُمْ أَرْدَاكُمْ
فَأَصْبَحْتُم مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ.[115]

The celestial angels then address humankind, 'You possess no dominion whatsoever to command your limbs and senses to conceal your transgressions! Such an ability lies far beyond your grasp, unable to shroud your misdeeds beneath a veil of secrecy. Yet, while in the realm of mortals, you harbored an erroneous perception of the Exalted God. You believed in His ignorance of your actions. This flawed assumption, (أَرْدَاكُمْ), precipitated your downfall,

فَأَصْبَحْتُم مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ.

He is transforming you into one of the vanquished.

This verse highlights a crucial distinction in the angels' condemnation of the sinner. While their actions, as evidenced by their body's testimony, were indeed sinful, the angels' focus isn't simply on the act, but they consider the underlying belief that fueled it. They emphasize that the "witnessing" of the limbs, eyes, ears, and skin reveals a past assumption: the sinner erroneously believed God remained unaware of their deeds. This mistaken belief, not simply the actions themselves, ultimately led to their downfall.

Sins are the primary cause of suspicion toward God

Transgressions engender a distrust of God, and it is this very doubt that casts one into the fires of damnation. Conversely, if a person holds a favorable opinion of God, that faith becomes a salvific force capable of expiating one's sins and securing divine forgiveness. On this very principle, God The Exalted has promised and pledged to Himself that He would forgive those who have reasonable opinion of God. Therefore, the Imam uses this passage well here:

مُنْتَجِزٌ ما وَعَدتَ مِنَ الصَّفحِ عَمَّن أحسَنَ بِکَ ظَنّاً.

I embody the fulfillment of your promise of forgiveness for those who hold you in high regard. This promise resonates with me: to those who view you favorably, you extend your grace and pardon their transgressions.

The lowliness of the servants and the forgiveness of God by His grace

و ما أنا یا رَبِّ و ما خَطَرِی؟

In the throes of humility and submission, I humbly inquire, "O Lord, who am I, and what is my worth before You?"

Man, overwhelmed by a sense of their insignificance, resorts to the interrogative pronoun "ما" (*ma*) rather than the personal pronoun "من" (*man*), acknowledging their likeness to non-rational beings rather than claiming the dignity of humanity.

هَبنِی بِفَضلِکَ.

In the depths of Your grace, I humbly beseech You, O Merciful One, to not grant me absolution based on my merits, which are utterly insignificant. Instead, shower upon me the splendor of Your boundless mercy and pardon me for Your sake alone.

I am a mere speck in the vast expanse of Your creation, a fleeting wisp of consciousness, hardly worthy of Your attention. I humbly stand before You, recognizing my insignificance before Your infinite grandeur.

O Compassionate One, disregard any perceived goodness or perfection in me, for they are mere illusions compared to Your boundless perfection. Instead, grant me forgiveness out of the sheer generosity of Your heart.

I am not a rational being. O Lord, but a mere vessel of Your creation, utterly unworthy of Your forgiveness. Yet, I dare to approach You, not through my own merits, but through the boundless depths of Your mercy.

وَ تَصَدَّقْ عَلَيَّ بِعَفْوِكَ.

And be almsgiving to me by Your forgiveness.

The veil of God, the concealer of human sins

أَيْ رَبِّ جَلِّلْنِي بِسِتْرِكَ وَ اعْفُ عَنْ تَوْبِيخِي بِكَرَمِ وَجْهِكَ.

O God, my Lord, my Master, veil me!

I humbly implore God to overlook my transgressions and conceal me from view, much like a cloak or shawl shields the body from exposure. Cover me with a thick cloth that you throw on me from your side, and my sins are hidden there.

Forgive my sins, not for my goodness, but for the dignity and generosity of Your Face, which is so holy that it never stoops down to confront my sins and say, "You have sinned!" and blame and accuse me!

فَلَوِ اطَّلَعَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَىٰ ذَنْبِي غَيْرُكَ مَا فَعَلْتُهُ وَ لَوْ خِفْتُ تَعْجِيلَ الْعُقُوبَةِ لَاجْتَنَبْتُهُ، لَا لِأَنَّكَ أَهْوَنُ النَّاظِرِينَ [إِلَيَّ] وَ أَخَفُّ الْمُطَّلِعِينَ [عَلَيَّ]، بَلْ لِأَنَّكَ يَا رَبِّ خَيْرُ السَّاتِرِينَ وَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ وَ أَكْرَمُ الْأَكْرَمِينَ، سَتَّارُ الْعُيُوبِ، غَفَّارُ الذُّنُوبِ، عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ؛ تَسْتُرُ الذَّنْبَ بِكَرَمِكَ وَ تُؤَخِّرُ الْعُقُوبَةَ بِحِلْمِكَ.

O God, if my actions today were to be witnessed by anyone else, I would not have dared to commit them. Similarly, if I genuinely feared immediate punishment for my transgressions, I would have avoided them. However, I admit to succumbing to temptation, knowing your divine awareness fully. My sin was not a deliberate act of defiance but rather a lapse in judgment, where the fear of earthly consequences outweighed the gravity of your decision.

My transgression was not motivated by believing in Your diminished power to punish. I acknowledge that those who witness my sin may have the capacity for retribution, but their authority pales compared to Yours. My sin stemmed from a different failing. Lord, You are the most merciful concealer of faults and the most just judge. I have transgressed precisely because of Your boundless capacity for forgiveness and concealment.

Some people readily expose perceived transgressions, even when the actions may not be genuinely sinful. They might distort or misrepresent even ordinary

actions, casting them in a negative light. This negativity can also extend to positive actions, where good deeds are misinterpreted and spread as sinful or wrong. O God, this course of action is incompatible with your divine will.

Even our seemingly virtuous deeds may not be entirely free from imperfection, yet even genuine transgressions committed solely against You, are met with forbearance. To whom would You expose them? Your creation exists within Your domain; there is no audience for such a revelation. Yet, You choose not to reveal them even within this context.

Furthermore, you are motivated to keep human transgressions confidential, ensuring they remain unknown. This secrecy extends even to those on the same level as humanity. Your incentive for concealment is undeniable!

If someone dares to expose a human's sin, you condemn them to hell and inflict severe punishment. You challenge them, "Why reveal the sin of a fellow believer, especially one that has already been committed?" This highlights your cherished attribute of concealment.

O God, you are the ultimate keeper of secrets. My sins are a consequence of your perceived forgiveness. Had I believed you were unforgiving, like those who expose the faults of others, I wouldn't have transgressed. However, your immense mercy has been misinterpreted, leading us to exploit your kindness by sinning.

The justice, purity, and manliness of the Commander of the Faithful were factors that the enemies of the Prophet exploited

Following the Prophet's passing, Amir Al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), renowned for his piety and commitment to monotheism, remained steadfast within established boundaries. However, others misconstrued his adherence to justice, faith, and monotheism as an opportunity to usurp his rightful position. They exploited his respect for the Prophet's final wishes and his aversion to conflict to justify their actions.

Ali's forbearance is not a sign of weakness but a manifestation of his nobility. As described in Islamic tradition, he embodies the virtues of the "خَيرُ الحافظين - best of guardians" and the "خَيرُ الساترين -best of concealers." Those who engage in petty squabbles are akin to flies swarming around refuse; a person of stature would not even waste their attention on such a spectacle. Similarly, those who contend for worldly power resemble dogs fighting over a bone. Their struggle is beneath the dignity of a truly noble character.[116]

Consequently, I sinned because I perceived You as the best Concealer and the Wisest Judge. In some narrations, it is stated, "And the Most Patient of the Patient;

و أحلَمُ الأحلَمين.[117]

I observed that you are more patient than all the patients.

و أكرَمُ الأكرَمين .

You are the most noble, O Lord!

We, in our despair, plead for your pardon, O Exalted. Your infinite patience allows you to forgo constant struggle and torment. Even when we transgress against your divine order, within the vastness of your power that encompasses both heaven and earth, a single misstep on our part doesn't provoke immediate rebuke. We have taken undue advantage of this grace, leading us to sin.

ستّارُ العُيوب .

You conceal faults well.

علّامُ الغُيوب .

You know the unseen well.

God's Forbearance in Punishing Sinners

تَستُرُ الذَّنبَ بِكَرَمِکَ و تُؤَخِّرُ العُقوبةَ بِحِلمِکَ.

Though You witness our sins, your boundless generosity leads You to conceal them. You draw a veil over our transgressions, choosing forbearance and patience over swift punishment.

With boundless patience, you postpone punishment repeatedly, waiting for a single good deed from this erring servant to grant complete forgiveness. You are never hasty to impose retribution.

فَلَکَ الحَمدُ عَلیٰ حِلمِکَ بَعدَ عِلمِکَ و عَلیٰ عَفوِکَ بَعدَ قُدرَتِک.

Therefore, O Lord, praise is due to Your holy essence, for You are patient after knowing and forgive after having power.

The Virtue of Combining Patience with Knowledge in God and the Pious

While patience is a valuable asset, its true power lies in its synergy with knowledge. Without a foundation of knowledge, patience can postpone adverse outcomes without offering a path for improvement. Conversely, an individual armed with patience and expertise possesses a powerful tool for mitigating errors.

Gone are the days of the Hakimbashis, medical practitioners renowned for their deep knowledge and experience. Patients then approached them with

deference, fearing a curt dismissal if they dared to speak. "Silence!" the Hakimbashi might bark, flinging his pen and inkwell aside. Here's your prescription. Fetch it and be gone!" Why such brusqueness? Imagine a patient arriving with many complaints: "Doctor, this medicine made my ear swell, blurred my vision, and sent my stomach rumbling!" The Hakimbashi, aware of these common side effects, found such details tedious. He wasn't interested in lengthy explanations; his knowledge was absolute. Thus, the curt command: "Quiet!"

These Hakimbashis were arguably a breed apart. While their expertise was undeniable, their lack of patience and bedside manner left much to be desired. In stark contrast, today's doctors are known for their gentle demeanor and willingness to listen.

However, one might wonder if genuine knowledge underlies this affability. Are today's doctors as well-versed in their field as their predecessors? Does their charm compensate for a potential lack of expertise? Like merchants with empty coffers, are they merely peddling a facade of care to extract money from trusting patients?

While generalizations are dangerous, some might argue that a worrying number of modern doctors fall into this category. Actual medical knowledge remains elusive for many, masked by a veneer of smiles and polite conversation. Thankfully, this isn't true for all practitioners, as dedicated and skilled doctors still exist, carrying the torch of genuine healthcare forward. Therefore, it is doubtful that a learned person will be patient! That is why we often find in the narrations that "The learned person is the one who mixes knowledge with patience!" His knowledge becomes his patience, and his patience becomes his knowledge.

The Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, says in the description of the pious:

يَمزُجُ الحِلمَ بالعِلمِ.[118]

The pious are those who have patience and knowledge together.

Merging Knowledge and Patience: A Delicate Blend mortar and pestle

Imagine combining chickpeas and beans. You can easily separate them later because they are simply mixed. Now, consider vinegar and honey. When you mix them, they transform into a new substance called "vinegar and honey." You cannot separate them back into their original components. This is known as "compounded mixing," where the ingredients become one.

The analogy of "compounded mixing" describes the ideal state of a scholar and a pious person. They should strive to integrate their knowledge and patience seamlessly so that these qualities become inseparable. This is an incredibly challenging task, even more so than having Mount Abu Qubays, a massive mountain, crumble upon you.

God's knowledge of hearts and treacherous eyes

فَلَكَ الحَمدُ عَلى حِلمِكَ بَعدَ عِلمِكَ.

Praise belongs to You after You know all those weaknesses and flaws in our intentions.

يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ.[119]

Your awareness extends to the deepest recesses of our hearts and minds, encompassing even the fleeting thoughts that arise within us. No covert action remains unseen, be it a subtle glance or a momentary desire. Your vigilance is boundless, and your understanding far surpasses even the sum of human knowledge. This reflective comprehension and your boundless mercy make you genuinely exceptional.

Forgiveness from a position of power is the best kind of forgiveness

وَعَلى عَفوِكَ بَعدَ قُدرَتِكَ.

True forgiveness shines brightest when exercised by those in positions of power and authority. This concept resonates with the saying, "And on your forgiveness after your power."

The act of forgiveness can be complex, particularly when considering power imbalances. Some argue that true forgiveness requires a position of strength. For instance, if a law enforcement officer assaults a civilian, the civilian's "forgiveness" may be interpreted as self-preservation rather than a genuine release of resentment. This could be seen as appeasement, a desperate attempt to avoid further harm. In such scenarios, saying "I forgive you" might be a cry for help or a way to de-escalate a tense situation rather than a genuine expression of forgiveness. True forgiveness, it can be argued, requires a sense of agency and the ability to choose.

The concept of a "master of forgiveness" suggests that forgiveness has greater power when it originates from a position of strength. The one who forgives has the authority to choose and is not compelled by fear.[120]

True forgiveness comes not from the absence of power to retaliate but from the conscious choice to offer mercy. Someone who can forgive a transgression even when they can strike back demonstrates a far greater strength than resorting to revenge. This concept aligns with the resilience many people display after losing loved ones. They find solace in the belief of a higher power and choose acceptance over bitterness.

Authentic patience arises not from resignation to loss but from a splendid acceptance of life's impermanence. In the face of tragedy, it transcends mere stoicism, reaching instead for a deeper understanding of fate and the interconnectedness of all things.

This genuine patience starkly contrasts with a superficial resignation disguised as piety. True acceptance does not resemble a begrudging acknowledgment of misfortune, nor does it resort to blaming divine forces for unavoidable consequences. It is not about bowing passively to circumstances but embracing life's fluidity with grace and wisdom. To exemplify this distinction, consider the metaphor of a broken glass. While some may react with despair and offer a token of acceptance by "dedicating it to the shrine," such an act speaks more to a sense of loss than genuine understanding. True patience, in contrast, lies in recognizing the inherent fragility of even the most cherished things, acknowledging their impermanence without succumbing to bitterness or resentment.

True forgiveness is a mark of ultimate power, transcending the desire for retribution. While God possesses the absolute power to instantly inflict punishment on sinners, as alluded to in (أَخْذَ عَزِيزٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ),[121] He chooses instead to extend boundless forgiveness.

يا جَميلَ العفو! يا حَسَنَ التّجاوز! يا واسِعَ المَغفِرة.[122]
يا مَن أظهَرَ الجَميلَ و سَتَرَ القَبيحَ، يا مَن لَم يُؤاخِذ بِالجَريرة.[123]

Is it even possible for a human to adequately praise such a divine being? Expressions like "O God, how magnificent You are!" or "You, the epitome of forgiveness!" or "The boundless wellspring of grace!" evoke a sense of awe akin to a lover overwhelmed by their beloved's beauty. However, these comparisons to earthly things ultimately fall short, mere shadows compared to the true brilliance. Faithful hymns of praise, far more powerful, acknowledge the divine's role as the revealer of beauty, the concealer of flaws, and the one who grants forgiveness without judgment.

فَلَکَ الحَمدُ عَلیٰ حِلمِکَ بَعدَ عِلمِکَ و عَلیٰ عَفوِکَ بَعدَ قُدرَتِکَ!
و یَحمِلُنی و یُجَرِّئُنی عَلیٰ مَعصِیَتِکَ حِلمُکَ عَنّی و یَدعونی إلیٰ قِلَّةِ الحَیاءِ سِترُکَ عَلَیّ.

And Your forbearance towards me has caused me to sin, and Your concealment of me has caused me to be shameless.

Your immense patience and forbearance, while a testament to Your grace, have also, to my shame, presented a temptation to transgress. I recognize that swift consequences for my missteps might have led me to a different path. Instead, the space You afford has sometimes encouraged me to repeat my failings, mistaking Your mercy for tacit approval.

Your concealment of me has caused me to be shameless.

وَ يَدعُونِي إِلَى قِلَّةِ الحَيَاءِ سِترُكَ عَلَيَّ.
وَ يُسرِعُنِي إِلَى التَّوَثُّبِ عَلَى مَحَارِمِكَ مَعرِفَتِي بِسَعَةِ رَحمَتِكَ وَ عَظِيمِ عَفوِكَ.

And my knowledge of the vastness of Your mercy and the greatness of Your forgiveness hastens me to transgress Your prohibitions.

The vastness of Your grace presents a paradox. It offers solace, the knowledge that every misstep finds resolution in Your infinite mercy. Yet, this same quality can become a temptation. We can imagine mercy not as a boundless ocean but as a limited tide, receding after washing up on the shores of sin. Such a scenario, with its swift consequences, might deter further transgressions. However, Your mercy is all-encompassing, a relentless current that carries even sin away. While a testament to Your love, this boundless compassion has admittedly encouraged me to approach the limits of Your benevolence. I confess that my awareness of Your immense grace has acted as an invitation rather than a deterrent.

Your boundless grace extends nightly to countless hearts seeking forgiveness. Its depth is further illuminated by stories of redemption, such as the lifting of suffering in a graveyard from the mere passing of a prayerful soul. Imagine the impact of a life devoted to faith and compassion, leaving an echo of solace even after departing. These whispers of mercy, from both grand gestures and quiet acts of devotion, offer a glimpse into the immensity of Your divine grace.

وَ عَظِيمِ عَفوِكَ.

Initially, grasping forgiveness's seemingly limitless nature presented a potential barrier to my moral development. Misinterpreting its vastness, I mistakenly believed that transgressions might hold little consequence.

My requests to the Lord after praising and glorifying Him

يَا حَلِيمُ، يَا كَرِيمُ، يَا حَيُّ، يَا قَيُّوم.

O God, the Most Patient, O God, the Most Generous, the Ever-Living, and the Self-Sustaining.

يا غافرَ الذَّنبِ، يا قابلَ التَّوبِ، يا عظيمَ المَنِّ، يا قديمَ الإحسان.

Most merciful and ever-compassionate source of our redemption, your infinite grace and benevolence towards your creations know no limit. You have been revered as the eternal fountain of kindness, and your name is forever revered.

أينَ سترُكَ الجميلُ؟! أينَ عفوُكَ الجليلُ؟! أينَ فرجُكَ القريبُ؟! أينَ غياثُكَ السريعُ؟! أينَ رحمتُكَ الواسعةُ؟! أينَ عطاياكَ الفاضلةُ؟! أينَ مواهبُكَ الهنيئةُ؟! أينَ صنائعُكَ السنيّةُ؟! أينَ فضلُكَ العظيمُ؟! أينَ منُّكَ الجسيمُ؟! أينَ إحسانُكَ القديمُ؟! أينَ كرمُكَ يا كريمُ؟!

Where is Your beautiful concealment? Where is Your great forgiveness? Where is Your near relief? Where is Your swift aid? Where is Your vast mercy? Where are Your virtuous gifts? Where are Your happy blessings? Where are Your eternal works? Where is Your great favor? Where is Your great bounty? Where is Your ancient kindness? Where is Your generosity, O Generous One?

O Divine Source, You exist in this unparalleled beauty and grace state, yet I stand before You in utter humility. I extoll Your every attribute, from Your captivating eyes and majestic stature to the gentle curve of Your smile. All these praises are but whispers in the face of Your boundless beauty. Yet, the core of this radiance seems to turn away from my yearning soul. What solace is there for one so unworthy of Your direct regard?

Instead of mere description, let me offer a plea for concealment, O Master of Veils! Your power to shroud imperfections is manifold. A mere mortal might cover a blemish with another, a tarry mask for crude bricks. But You, the Divine Weaver of grace, can offer a replica of forgiveness woven with silken strands of compassion, not a crude patch of tar.

Though seeking beautiful concealment seems admirable, the means can become cumbersome. Imagine striving to mask imperfections like a painter painstakingly layering mud, plaster, and paint on a wall. The process itself, while arduous, reflects a divine patience. Yet, after months of meticulous effort, the result might still feel awkward, even distracting. The painted surface could reflect your image, intruding upon your devotional focus instead of facilitating it.

Divine Source, I yearn for forgiveness, not merely cloaking my imperfections, but one that transforms them into sublime creations. Grant me absolution so exquisite that it penetrates my core, dissolving the stains of past transgressions and illuminating the essence of my being. Let this inner transformation be as complete as a master painter's touch, where the pigments transcend the surface, permeating

the walls themselves, leaving only a radiant essence in their wake. If questioned about its nature, this transformed being would speak not of past flaws but of the artist's masterful embrace, echoing: I am pure beauty born by divine grace.

My words may overflow with praise, but the yearning behind them cannot be disguised. O Divine Source, I praise Your boundless attributes, not to manipulate but to express the awe that resonates within me. Your mercy, generosity, and countless virtues call forth this humble supplication. Otherwise, why would I stand before You, pouring these desires on such a sacred night? It is not naivety to seek solace in Your divine presence, but perhaps an imperfection to allow personal hopes to cloud the purity of devotion. Forgive this human frailty, for surely such candor, however flawed, pales in comparison to the immaculate purity of Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him).

The Beautiful Concealment of the Lord

أينَ سَترُکَ الجَميلُ.

Where is that exquisite veil of Your grace woven with threads of divine mercy? That bejeweled tapestry is so radiant and pure that it can enfold every blemish and transform it into luminous beauty. Have we tasted a glimpse of such a veil? A physical bath may cleanse the outward form, but can it unveil the soul's hidden splendor? No, only the sacred bath of Your forgiveness possesses such transformative power. Here, blindness gives way to radiant sight, deafness blossoms into the symphony of creation, and crippling weaknesses are replaced by newfound strength. Hearts burdened by grief and doubt emerge cleansed and serene, their very countenance reflecting the inner illumination. Once narrow and clouded, even eyes bathe in Your light and awaken to the clarity of gazelles grazing in celestial meadows. Ignorance melts away before the sunlit expanse of knowledge, and the frailty of human power yields to the embrace of Your infinite might. This is the actual bath of beauty, the baptism in Your divine essence that transmutes our very being into vessels of radiant grace.

أينَ سَترُکَ الجَميلُ أينَ عَفوُکَ الجَليلُ.

Where is Your beautiful veil? Where is Your great forgiveness?

أينَ فَرَجُکَ القَريب.

O Presence of solace and balm, where may one seek Your succor and comfort?

We implore You to lend a helping hand. Should you choose not to intervene, we will face the consequences. Our strength is failing us. We pray to You, Most Compassionate One, to act swiftly and offer us Your infinite mercy.

أينَ غياثُكَ السَّريع.

Where, amidst Your divine order, might we find swift and righteous intervention to alleviate our plight? We seek relief with utmost urgency.

أينَ رَحمَتُكَ الواسِعة.

Where might swift compassion descend and grant deliverance within the boundless notion of Your grace? Now, O Divine Source, we pray for Your merciful embrace.

أينَ عَطاياكَ الفاضِلة.

Where, within the boundless treasury of Your grace, reside those splendid blessings eager to descend and enfold us in their embrace? We beseech You, Divine Source, to manifest Your generous bounty swiftly.

أينَ مَواهِبُكَ السَّنيَّة.

Where in the boundless sphere of Your beneficence reside those exquisite blessings, those noble emblems of Your favor, those radiant tokens of Your grace, ready to adorn Your devoted servants?

أينَ صَنائِعُكَ السَّنيَّة.

Where, within the celestial treasury of merit, reside those illustrious accolades, those emblems of noble deeds, awaiting bestowment upon the deserving?

أينَ فَضلُكَ العَظيم.
أينَ مَنُّكَ الجَسيم.
أينَ إحسانُكَ القَديم.
أينَ كَرَمُكَ يا كَريم.
بِهِ فاستَنقِذني.

Where is Your great favor? Where is Your generous gift? Where is Your ancient kindness? Where is Your generosity, O Generous One? By it, save me!

I find myself on a challenging course with unforeseen turbulence. External pressures threaten to disorient me, and I yearn for clear direction. I seek to reclaim my focus and navigate this complex landscape with renewed purpose. Your guidance would be a guide in this storm, even amidst the clamor.

فَاستَنقِذني .

Have mercy on me, O God, and rescue me.

وَ بِرَحمَتِكَ فَخَلِّصني.

O God, by Your grace and mercy, take my hand and save me.

يا مُحسِنُ، يا مُجمِلُ، يا مُنعِمُ، يا مُفضِل.

O, benevolent God! O God of good deeds! O God of blessings! O God who gives virtue and grace.

لَستُ أتّكِلُ فی النَّجاةِ مِن عِقابِکَ علیٰ أعمالنا بَل بِفَضلِکَ علَینا، لأنّکَ أهلُ التَّقویٰ و أهلُ المَغفِرة.

May the Divine Source, in its boundless grace, transmute this narrative into an embodiment of truth and actuality. May He grant us the capacity to emulate the righteous aspirations of the Imams. May we be enveloped by the boundless ocean of His benevolence and munificence. May our aspirations and pursuits ultimately lead us to realize His sacred presence. In light of our sincere pursuit, may we be granted absolution for our transgressions.

بِمحمّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرینَ، صلِّ علیٰ محمّدٍ و آل محمّد.

By Muhammad and his pure family, and may God bless Muhammad and his family.

Session seven: Knowledge of God is the only support for humans in their salvation from the commanding nafs

أعوذ بالله من الشّيطان الرّجيم
بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم
و صلّى الله على محمّد و آله الطّاهرين
و لعنة الله على أعدائهم أجمعين .

Only God supports humans in their salvation, not their good deeds

لستُ أتّكلُ فى النّجاة من عقابك على أعمالنا؛ بل بفضلك علينا، لأنّك أهلُ التّقوى و أهلُ المغفرة، تُبدئ بالإحسان نعمًا و تعفو عن الذّنب كرمًا. فما ندرى ما نشكرُ: أ جميل ما تنشُرُ أم قبيح ما تستُرُ أم عظيم ما أبليتَ و أوليتَ أم كثير ما منه نجّيتَ و عافيتَ؟

My salvation rests not on our own merits but on Your boundless grace. You are the Most Revered, the Most Forgiving. You shower us with blessings borne of Your kindness, and with a generous heart, You pardon our transgressions. We stand humbled, overwhelmed by the depth of Your gifts. Should we express gratitude for the beauty You bestow, the unseen faults You conceal, the immensity of what You have granted, or the countless dangers from which You have shielded us?

The premise that personal actions solely secure salvation warrants critical examination. Can reliance solely on past deeds be an adequate foundation for achieving a desired outcome?

All virtuous accomplishments ultimately stem from divine providence and grace. Without divine will, even positive actions would remain unattainable. Hence, any accomplishment of good deeds reflects a divine favor bestowed upon the individual.

The attribution of individual merit to virtuous and harmful actions must be re-evaluated within the framework of divine causality. Absent divine volition, even pursuing good intentions would be rendered impossible. Thus, the ability to enact positive actions should be recognized as a divine benefaction.

Beyond the aforementioned considerations, even if one were to envision the hypothetical completion of every conceivable virtuous act, it would remain demonstrably insufficient in the face of the divine. No human action could ever truly encompass the immensity of divine merit or fully honor the divine station. This inherent disparity is reflected in the universal human experience of conscience-awareness, suggesting an unfulfilled obligation towards the divine.

While individual achievements are commendable, everyone possesses inherent limitations and flaws. Even within a system that recognizes personal

accomplishments, accountability for transgressions remains a necessary element. Addressing these consequences is fundamental to acknowledging our shared responsibility and upholding a just framework. However, given these principles, what justification could a person offer to challenge God's actions and claim, 'You do not have the right to do this?'

لكَ الحُجّةُ عليَّ في جميعِ ذلكَ، و لا حُجّةَ لي في ما جرىٰ عليَّ فيهِ قضاؤكَ و الزَمني حُكمُكَ و بَلاؤكَ.[124]

In the face of divine judgment, the claim may ring out: 'I, the All-Knowing, All-Present, and All-Encompassing, bestowed upon you clear instructions. As My servant, why did you disobey?' Your transgression was neither predetermined nor coerced, rendering claims of free will irrelevant. Despite this, you strayed from My divine directive.

A just system demands a comprehensive assessment of both virtuous and improper conduct. While commendable, prior achievements should not automatically absolve individuals from potential consequences for transgressions. This ensures a balanced and equitable evaluation. However, what significance do these actions hold if the infinite standards of divine worthiness can never be fully attained through human good deeds? The ethical burden of past transgressions remains substantial and indefensible. Even a single infraction would be inexcusable before the ultimate judgment of divine justice and accountability. This raises a critical question: can anyone truly find absolute security in their deeds?

The Weeping of the Ahl al-Bayt in Munājāt: Rooted in Knowledge of Allah

The recorded supplications of the Imams, imbued with heartfelt expressions of humility, self-reflection, and dependence on divine grace, are not to be interpreted as mere instructive tools. They were authentic expressions of their spiritual experiences. Indeed, a deepening understanding of the universe and its grand design often evokes a sense of awe and reverence for the Divine alongside a recognition of one's limitations.

The recorded expressions of the Imams, characterized by self-awareness and a sense of their limitations, were not mere feigned displays. They stemmed from a genuine understanding of the human condition and their place within the grander scheme of existence. In the posture of devoted adherence, it was natural for them to be filled with a sense of humility, bordering on self-reproach. To lack such an awareness would be incompatible with the true essence of servitude.[125]

Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) delivered a detailed sermon in one of the Eid al-Adha prayers. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates this sermon in his book Man la Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh and by the late Ṣāḥib al-Jawāhir in his book al- Jawāhir in the chapter on the prayers of the two Eids.

فو الله لو حننتم حنين الواله العجلان و دعوتم بمثل دعاء الأنام و جأرتم جؤار متبتلي الرهبان...[126]

I swear by God if you scream and cry like that poor, short-handed, regretful man, and wail like that woman whose child has died, and let out a heart-wrenching sigh from your heart, and cry for the whole of your life and sit on the ashes and..., and ask God to forgive one of your sins, you will not find the merit for it by this action.

Solemnly, the weight of your remorse, expressed through lament and sorrow, would not guarantee absolution for even a single transgression. Even years of anguish and self-denial hold no inherent right to divine forgiveness. Nevertheless,

و لكن برحمته ترحمون.[127]

Divine grace extends universally, embracing all without distinction. It transcends transgressions, offering forgiveness and absolution, ultimately lifting the burden of our past.

Assuming such a scenario – where a person dedicates their entire life to repentance for a single transgression – does this automatically guarantee a state of inherent worthiness for reward, absolution, or transcendence? By no means. What inherent right grants such merit? Who bestows such a claim upon an individual? Ultimately, isn't it a divine gift? The one who reigns supreme, holding ultimate authority, is beyond dispute and opposition. Yet, alongside this undeniable power resides a boundless grace, encompassing all, seeking and offering absolution, irrespective of transgressions.

و لكن برحمته ترحمون.

Here, too, Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) prays on this basis that:

لست اتكل في النجاة من عقابك على أعمالنا.

My path to redemption does not lie solely in my acts. I do not presume to claim salvation through such a precarious means.

Mere actions offer no guarantee. He proclaimed, 'Who am I, Lord, and what merit do I hold?

وَ مَا أَنَا يَا رَبِّ وَ مَا خَطَرِى.[128]

Before You, O God, I am but a speck. What significance have my works?

بَلْ بِفَضْلِكَ عَلَيْنَا.

Therefore, I trust solely in Your boundless grace. In Your divine benevolence, You shower us with favor, blessings, and enduring support. I confidently embrace this unfailing grace.

And this is also a place of reliance; why?

لِأَنَّكَ أَهْلُ التَّقْوَى وَ أَهْلُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ.

You are a person of piety and forgiveness.

Divine nature transcends retaliation driven by human attributes like scarcity, envy, or vengeful malice. Your essence is devoid of such impulses. While consequences may exist, they stem from a transformative intent, not punitive measures. Your inherent essence leans towards compassion and the fostering of virtue.

تُبْدِئُ بِالْإِحْسَانِ نِعَمًا وَ تَعْفُو عَنِ الذَّنْبِ كَرَمًا.

It is your nature and habit to bestow blessings through your initial kindness.

Genuine acts of kindness are bestowed freely, without any anticipation of compensation. Authentic generosity arises not from what an individual can offer you but from what you can contribute to their well-being.

تُبْدِئُ بِالْإِحْسَانِ نِعَمًا.

Even if we do not deserve it, You shower us with blessings.

What foundational blessings has one been endowed with by the divine? First and foremost, the very gift of existence. All subsequent virtues and capabilities that emerge from humanity are inherently tied to this fundamental gift. Could any concept of good deeds, knowledge, power, or life arise without human existence? Therefore, the initial blessing, the greatest of all, is the act of creation, bringing forth our reality from nothingness. All other blessings follow from this primordial gift, constituting the essence of being.

Furthermore, successful enacting good often hinges on an underlying sense of grace and support. Without guidance or assistance, the motivation to pursue

positive actions may falter. Thus, achieving positive outcomes can also be understood as a divine blessing.

While individual agency plays a role in determining outcomes, the ultimate factors contributing to success or failure reside in God alone. Consider, for example, intending to visit the mosque for prayer. Driven by personal resolve, you embark on this journey uncoerced. Yet, seemingly unrelated circumstances align in your favor. When you rise, you feel refreshingly energized free from fatigue or discomfort. Reaching for ablution, cool water readily awaits. Guided by illuminating lamps, you swiftly locate your misplaced shoes. Attired and prepared, you arrive at the mosque, your mind and spirit primed for devotion. Though initiated by your choice, a sequence of supportive factors, each enhancing the next, has facilitated your triumphant arrival.

Consider a scenario where a strong internal motivation to pursue a personal endeavor arises. Yet, a sequence of unforeseen and disruptive circumstances impede progress. One feels a physical and emotional decline, leading to fatigue and discouragement. Simple tasks become fraught with unexpected challenges, like malfunctioning utilities, infestations, or bodily injuries. Even reaching the intended destination becomes cumbersome, further diminishing potential engagement. In such instances, this phenomenon might be termed 'خذلان' (khedlan), representing an unforeseen hindrance compared to the ideal state of 'توفيق' (tufiq), which signifies progress and accomplishment.

In some circumstances, individuals encounter a favorable confluence of factors that facilitate their pursuits. This can be viewed as a stroke of fortune or a fortuitous alignment of circumstances. Conversely, situations may arise where aspirations remain unrealized, seemingly due to unforeseen challenges or obstacles. Within the broader context of life, both scenarios can be understood as part of a preordained plan governed by principles beyond our immediate comprehension.

If someone unexpectedly encounters a setback or hurdle, it can be a valuable opportunity for introspection and reevaluation. Taking a moment to consider potential contributing factors, either internal or external, can provide useful insights for future navigation.[129]

The intricate pattern of our world reveals a remarkable coherence, with even seemingly random events weaving into a larger pattern. This complexity can be awe-inspiring, prompting reflection and acknowledgment of the vast forces

beyond our immediate comprehension. While individual agency remains crucial, recognizing our destinies' interconnectedness and underlying order can offer valuable perspectives and foster a sense of humility.[130]

تُبدِیُ بالإحسانِ نِعَماً.

Your essence reflects immense generosity from the very beginning. We are surrounded by countless blessings woven with innumerable threads of good fortune! Yet, despite this overwhelming kindness, we often fall short and stray from the path of gratitude.

و تَعفُو عنِ الذَّنبِ کرَماً.

In the face of our limitations and missteps, a boundless understanding prevails. Despite any acts of defiance or straying from prescribed boundaries, a vast and solid power grants forgiveness and allows renewal. This enduring capacity for benevolence transcends our shortcomings and offers the potential for redemption.

فما نَدری ما نَشکُرُ: أ جَمیلَ ما تَنشُرُ أم قَبیحَ ما تَستُرُ.

Overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of Your benevolence, we find ourselves at a loss for words. In the face of such boundless generosity, a question arises: To what extent should we express our gratitude? Should we first acknowledge the radiant beauty that surrounds us, a testament to Your initial grace, or should we prioritize offering thanks for the countless transgressions You have veiled, sheltering us from the consequences of our missteps?

أم عَظیمَ ما أبلَیتَ و أولَیتَ أم کثیرَ ما مِنهُ نَجَّیتَ و عافَیتَ؟!

Confronted with the many challenges You set before us, we stand perplexed by the sheer spectrum of Your benevolence. Through Your guiding hand, we navigated trials that strengthened our resolve and refined our devotion. Should our foremost expression of gratitude be for these trials, through which we learned and grew, or should it prioritize acknowledging the countless instances where You shielded us from deserved consequences and preserved our well-being?

Āfiat means safety, well-being, security, freedom from danger, a peaceful state of existence, salvation or deliverance, righteousness or piety.

At times, one may feel a deep sense of merited consequence for past actions, a pang of internal reprimand gnawing at the soul. Upon closer introspection, we might recognize a metaphorical storm cloud gathering, poised to unleash its weight upon us. Yet, in the face of this potential hardship, an inexplicable reprieve arrives, a wave of relief washing over us. This well-being transcends mere

physical solace. It signifies a renewed inner peace, emotional stability, and a conviction in our chosen path. From these self-inflicted hardships, we emerge resilient, our spirit fortified, and our resolve cemented. We are ultimately granted safe passage through the tribulations we conjured ourselves.

يا حَبيبَ مَن تَحبَّبَ إليك، و يا قُرّةَ عينِ مَن لاذَ بك و انقَطعَ إليك.

O Beloved of those who love You, and O Joy of the eyes of those who seek refuge in You.

Conscious of our inherent limitations, we humbly approach a transcendent ideal, yearning for a connection we may not entirely deserve. Our imperfections and the inescapable constraints of our being render us incapable of attaining absolute worthiness. Yet, driven by an innate aspiration, we engage in acts – prayers, fasting, pilgrimages – seeking to embody qualities we believe resonate with our desired state. Though undeniably flawed and temporary, these efforts represent our ongoing pursuit of self-improvement, striving to align ourselves with the lofty principles we admire.

Our outward actions may not reflect our inner aspirations, yet the consequences can be genuine and transformative. Our efforts to cultivate something noble, even if initially tentative or imperfect, can ultimately resonate with a more considerable truth within us. This journey from aspirational metaphor to authentic realization is remarkable, akin to a creature shedding its borrowed guise and revealing its inherent potential. Graceful assistance, not unlike the boundless generosity of the universe itself, opens this path to transformation, allowing even our initial ploy to pave the way toward genuine expression.

We proclaim our yearning for a transcendent ideal, striving for an elusive connection to the very essence of existence. Yet, what truly defines this ultimate pursuit? What is the nature of this fundamental reality we desperately seek? These questions are infinitely beyond our mortal grasp, and even contemplating them until the end of existence seems futile. What does our language even signify in the face of such immensity? And yet, we immerse ourselves in endeavors we deem crucial, only to discover their triviality under the gaze of this higher truth. Can our finite actions ever truly bridge the gap towards that infinite reality?

عَنقا شکار کس نشود، دام باز گیر.[131]

Forget capturing the impossible; even the finest snare holds no sway over the legendary phoenix. Yet, behold! An extraordinary sight unfolds: the mythical bird

lies within the trap, not as a captive but as a conqueror. The cage designed to restrain has been shattered, its fragments now paving the way for the phoenix's triumphant ascension.

Though our actions appear metaphorical, they act as a potent bridge leading to the realm of truth. In traversing this symbolic landscape, humans uncover the underlying realities that reside beyond. However, the metaphor serves as a crucial tool for unlocking the truth.

The late Mr. Ansari, revered may he be, uttered an insightful message: One cannot wear the garb of the shrine outside its walls. Upon entering, the individual is automatically adorned and clothed in the essence of the sacred space.

Actual spiritual attainment, the "garb of the shrine," cannot be claimed merely through assertion. It arises solely from immersion in the transformative process represented by the "shrine."

This spiritual garb signifies purity, sincerity, wisdom, love, enlightenment, and faith and can only be worn within the sacred confines of the sanctuary. Simply proclaiming one's religious affiliation - "I am a monotheist, a gnostic, or an ascetic" - is meaningless without a genuine internal transformation.

Similarly, claims of personal purity remain illusory without authentic spiritual purification. True asceticism transcends mere outward renunciation; it embodies genuine self-denial. Likewise, true holiness surpasses outward piety, radiating genuine sanctity. The essence lies not in claiming the metaphorical garb but in embodying its authentic reality.

Therefore, one who remains outside the transformative space, the "shrine," remains encased in the "body and corpse" of their physical being, unable to access the authentic spiritual attire. Yet, abandoning this pursuit would be a disservice. Indeed, those granted access to the sacred sanctum have diligently embraced this metaphorical practice outside its hallowed walls.

Not everyone may don the attire of the sanctuary; it is reserved for those who earnestly demonstrate their intent to enter its hallowed space and actively engage in its symbolic practices. Let every soul rise in the stillness of night to offer two prayers, extend a hand of charity, and resonate with the invocation "Ya Allah." Though this utterance may echo a thousand years apart from the sacred pronouncements heard within the holy shrines, its expression remains vital.

Should people undertake these endeavors, the gateway to a revelation will unfold. Upon traversing this threshold, they will be adorned with the sacred

vestments of the soul, revealing the illusionary nature of their former attire. They will then recognize how these previous adornments were mere deceptions masquerading as truths. Indeed, they were virtual delusions woven from deceit.

He was deceived by appearances, mistaking the mundane for the extraordinary. He perceived water as simply water, food as mere sustenance, and the coarse croaking of frogs as the sweet song of nightingales. However, with its unmatched purity, the true nightingale's song could only be heard within the sanctuary. Its delicate nature could not survive the harshness of the outside world.

Beyond the hallowed walls of the sanctuary reside those whose voices resemble the croaks of frogs, unfamiliar with the ethereal melody of the nightingale. In their yearning for its song, they may mistake the frog's cacophony for the divine symphony. Yet, their pursuit, though misguided, finds acceptance. For their very efforts in turning towards the sanctuary, we embrace their earnest attempt, acknowledging the familiarity they forge even with the lesser sound. In time, with measured steps, they will be ushered within, where the true nightingale's song will unveil its essence, transforming their understanding of its melodious truth.

The initial expressions of human affection towards the divine might appear as mere attempts to simulate love. While commendable, acts like charity, pilgrimage, jihad, and prayer could initially stem from desires for recognition, social approval, or even avoidance of suffering. However, when subjected to rigorous introspection, true intentions are unveiled. Through this process, genuine love for the divine can blossom within the heart. Though initially virtual, this love fosters transformation, culminating in authentic devotion. As the saying goes, "My love is my intercessor before him," signifying love's ultimate power in bridging the gap between the temporal and the eternal.

و حُبّی لَکَ شَفیعی إلَیکَ.

May my love serve as my intercession with you.

The human ascent towards the Divine unfolds gradually, hampered by the absence of true love. Love ignites the spark of yearning and propels our journey inward. Only when one cultivates genuine devotion does love blossom. Is its embrace offering solace and strength to bear the burdens along the path?

While adhering to the tenets of the Shari'a is fundamental, it is crucial to recognize that the path to spiritual elevation extends beyond mere ritual

observance. Engaging in obligatory practices like fasting, prayer, and charity during designated periods is important, yet their true value lies in the intention and inner transformation they inspire. Are mere actions devoid of genuine devotion truly the key to divine connection? Does the Divine require sustenance from our fasting or seek validation from our prayers? The efficacy of our actions rests not on formality but on the purity of our hearts and the sincerity of our efforts. Prayers performed hastily, without the necessary spiritual preparation, are akin to empty gestures. Likewise, acts of piety devoid of genuine introspection hold little weight. The cultivation of love, humility, and a conscious striving for inner purification ultimately paves the way for authentic spiritual progress.

Spiritual practices like prayer, refining an optimistic heart, and fostering good relationships within our religious community serve to purify our inner selves.[132] This inner transformation is essential for meaningful prayer; without it, prayers are considered incomplete, even with external rituals like ablution. True communion with the divine, often described as a believer's spiritual ascent, requires personal purity and a cleansed heart.

شست و شویی کن و آنگه به خرابات خرام تا نگردد ز تو این دیر خراب آلوده.[133]

With grime removed, then make your way so slow,
To revelry's den, lest virtue take a blow.

One cannot travel the path of God without purity.

الصلاة معراج المؤمن.

Prayer is the ascension of the believer.

This is not a narration, and the late author of the Kifāyah, who mentions it as a narration in the margin of the discussion of Ṣaḥīḥ and A'am, has made a mistake.[134] However, in the sayings of Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) in the same treatise of ḥuqūq, we read,

الصلاة وفادة إلى الله.[135]

Prayer is a journey towards God.

In some versions we have,

مرقاة إلى الله.[136]

It is an ascension to God.

Mirqāt (مرقاة)means ascension, i.e., a ladder that one climbs step by step to reach God. Spiritual ascension, akin to climbing a ladder toward divine connection, is symbolized by prayer. Just as reaching spiritual heights requires purity, so does performing prayer effectively. While physical ablution is essential, it serves as a reminder to strive for inner purification with each step. Removing negativity and cultivating love brings us closer to true love.

و يا قُرَّةَ عينِ مَن لاذَ بِكَ.

And (You are) the coolness of the eye of whoever takes refuge in You.

Consider those burdened by worry, fatigue, or anger. Their eyes often appear heavy and red-rimmed, reflecting the inner turmoil. Conversely, individuals experiencing peace, contentment, and joy radiate a distinct ocular quality of clarity and refreshment. This state of being, described in Persian as "قُرَّةَ عين," carries the evocative meaning of "coolness of the eye," suggesting a soothing tranquility that transcends mere brightness.

و انقَطَعَ إلَيكَ.

And they are severed from everything else and attached to You.

أنتَ المُحسِنُ و نَحنُ المُسيئونَ.

You are the beneficent, and we are the wrongdoers.

فتَجاوَز يا رَبِّ عن قبيحِ ما عندَنا بجَميلِ ما عِندَكَ.

So overlook my Lord, the evil that is within us by the beauty that is within You.

The boundless depths of Your goodness and beauty, O Divine One, hold the power to transcend even our most significant flaws. This infinitude encompasses all our shortcomings, cleansing and transforming them, ultimately leading to their complete eradication.

و أيَّ جَهلٍ يا رَبِّ لا يسَعُهُ جُودُكَ، او أيَّ زَمانٍ أطوَلُ مِن أناتِكَ.

O God, my Lord! What ignorance and evil deeds do we commit that Your generosity and kindness cannot eliminate?

While human fallibility is undeniable, Your immense generosity and compassion offer solace. All hope would be lost if this grace were finite, extending only to the pure and devout. Many like us would still fall short, even amongst those whose

good deeds exceed their failings. But Your vast mercy transcends such limitations, offering redemption to all who seek it.

Despite our transgressions, regardless of our sins, Your generosity and mercy encompass them all. In essence, You arrive and liberate us from their burden. This leaves us utterly at a loss for words.

O Divine One, what folly could we commit that Your boundless generosity cannot embrace and eliminate? What temporal measure could ever surpass the vastness of Your patience? Your patience, oh so enduring, knows no equal! Eons may rise and fall, epochs come and go, yet Your enduring essence of forbearance, tolerance, and generosity remains resolute. Such magnificence! Such limitless depths!

The insignificance of our actions pales in comparison to the vastness of Your blessings

وَ ما قَدرُ أعمالِنا فی جَنبِ نِعَمِکَ؟

Indeed, who are we to even contemplate such a comparison? The sum of our deeds dwindles to dust alongside the immeasurable gifts You have bestowed on us.

Our deeds are shadows compared to the blessings of God. Even one act of gratitude feels insufficient in the face of such immense generosity. Yet, the reality dwarfs even our most profound understanding: His gifts are infinitely numerous while our actions pale. This juxtaposition is a powerful reminder of our humility and the vastness of divine grace.

وَ كيفَ نَستَكثِرُ أعمالاً نُقابِلُ بها كَرَمَکَ؟

How can we consider our deeds to be of any significance when compared to Your immense generosity? What deed can we perform that could ever truly match Your grace?

بَل كَيفَ يَضيقُ عَلَى المُذنِبينَ ما وَسِعَهُم مِن رَحمَتِکَ؟!

How can sinners ever feel constricted by Your mercy? How can there be any room for narrowness or limitation when Your grace encompasses all?

Once bestowed upon the sinner, your mercy leaves no room for constriction or despair. While grace arriving yet falling short might leave them in self-inflicted distress, when fully embraced, it uplifts them and transforms their very transgressions into good deeds. Could there be a more awe-inspiring testament to Your divine power?

□

أولئك يبدل الله سيئاتهم حسنات.[137]

"Those are the ones whose evil deeds Allah will replace with good deeds." (Quran 25:70)

All a person's sins can be transformed into good deeds with a single act, blessing, or leap![138]

What is the purpose of this transformation? It is a manifestation of God's boundless generosity. When God's infinite grace intervenes, it brings about a change in the very essence of a person.

In an instant, an unbeliever becomes a believer, a disbeliever becomes a Muslim, and an idolater becomes a monotheist. This transformation marks a change in their very being. They were once animals, but now they are human. They were once a jinn, but now they are among the angels. They have moved from one state of being to another. The abode of sin is narrow and constricting, while the abode of faith is spacious and merciful. By the grace of God, they have transformed. They have left behind that narrow and constricted abode and entered the spaciousness of the Lord's mercy.

بَل كَيفَ يَضيقُ على المُذنِبينَ ما وَسِعَهُم مِن رَحمَتِك؟
يا واسِعَ المَغفِرَة! يا باسِطَ اليَدَين بالرَّحمة.

O You of vast forgiveness! O You who extend Your hands with mercy.

The Jews say, "The hand of Allah is chained."

يد الله مغلولة.[139]

They claim that God cannot do everything and cannot alleviate hardship. This interpretation asserts that He cannot intervene in all affairs, alleviate hardships, or inflict lasting punishment. They suggest His potential punishment on Judgment Day would be confined to a specific period, mirroring the forty days when Moses ascended Mount Sinai. During this time, their ancestors allegedly disobeyed Moses, rebelled against Aaron, and worshipped the golden calf.[140] They claim God's punitive power is temporary,[141] followed by eternal bliss in Paradise. However, that is not the case.[142]

يا باسِطَ اليَدَين بالرَّحمَة.

O You who extend Your hands with mercy!

God's benevolence manifests in providing for our needs and fostering our growth. Just as a teacher rewards progress while offering corrective guidance, God grants us blessings yet presents challenges to refine us. Both giving and taking, expansion and contraction, stem from divine mercy, ultimately leading to human perfection.

The teacher offers encouragement and rewards for effort but implements corrective measures as needed. Without such guidance, the student's learning would falter. Conversely, a lenient teacher offering rewards would hinder student development.

The Divine plan of Giving and Taking

The Most High bestows grace upon humanity through both the captivating allure of His divine beauty and the awe-inspiring manifestations of His majestic glory. He grants us blessings while also orchestrating challenges to foster spiritual growth. If He bestowed solely without ever testing, we might lapse into complacency, arrogantly attributing these gifts solely to ourselves and neglecting their divine origin. However, He operates through a dynamic interplay of giving and taking, expansion and contraction. This inherent rhythm permeates the universe, shaping our lives at every level – through daily cycles of joy and struggle, triumphs and challenges. This constant ebb and flow reminds us that He is the ultimate source of all, ever guiding us toward self-actualization. His hands remain outstretched in mercy; neither the hand of beauty nor might ever close. He neither fears to withhold nor to discipline, for the world itself spins in exquisite harmony upon the axis of His divine grandeur. Thus, we echo the timeless invocation: "O You who have opened both Your hands in overflowing mercy!

فوَ عِزَّتِکَ یا سیِّدی لَو نَهَرتَنی، ما بَرِحتُ مِن بابِکَ و لا کَفَفتُ عَن تَمَلُّقِکَ لِما انتَهی إلَیَّ مِنَ المَعرِفةِ بِجودِکَ و کَرَمِکَ.

By Your honor, O my Master, if You drive me away, I will not leave Your door, nor will I cease to flatter You because of what I know of Your generosity and kindness!

Tamalluq (تَمَلَّق و مَلَق، تَمَلُّقَه و مَلاقَه)is the act of expressing excessive praise even when the praise may not be factually accurate.[143] Have you ever observed a cat perched at a table? It may display exceptional manners, lowering its head and remaining silent, perhaps emitting a subtle meow to attract your attention.

However, this outward courtesy masks its true motivations. Fear, rather than genuine respect, governs the cat's behavior. Witness its true intentions unfold as you leave the room; it seizes an opportunity to steal any available food. This scenario serves as a poignant metaphor for identifying disingenuous behavior.

The Exalted God, my devotion to You is permanent. I will continue to express my love and praise, even if You deem me unworthy. Though I may be a sinner, I remain steadfast. No past transgressions nor any perceived demonic influence can deter me. My path is clear, and my resolve is unshakeable. Where else could I possibly turn? Guide me if there's another way, but if not, my dedication to You remains absolute.

Divine One, I acknowledge that my actions may be perceived as sinful. If You see me as such, I accept that judgment. However, is Your infinite mercy reserved solely for the righteous? It's true; sin may have a strong hold on me. But in that case, what path is left for those like me? There is only one proper door, and that door is Your love. Where else could I possibly turn?

Despair: The Ultimate Erosion of Humanity

Only one force can indeed shatter a person's spirit: despair. This insidious power, attributed to evil, can render everything futile. Faced with such overwhelming hopelessness, all sense of purpose and action dissipates, leaving only surrender and apathy.

Crucially, despair doesn't merely extinguish hope in the benevolent God; it actively fosters a false and hollow idol. This ersatz deity, born of desperation, lures individuals away from genuine meaning and connection. This manufactured god, fueled by despair, acts as the root of all sins.[144]

When despair takes hold, it dismantles the very foundation of our humanity. It erodes our spirit, dissolving our sense of truth, purpose, and essence. It leaves us hollow shells, devoid of the qualities that define us as living, striving beings. Therefore, despair is the greatest sin of all.

The human condition inherently entails the possibility of error. As fallible beings, we are susceptible to transgressions. However, encountering such moments must not lead to despair or a sense of irredeemability. Instead, we are empowered to turn towards a higher power, seeking understanding and forgiveness.

While some may doubt the severity of their acts and God's willingness to absolve them, such anxieties are unfounded. The divine being possesses infinite mercy, and His capacity for forgiveness exceeds any conceivable transgression.

Regardless of the perceived magnitude of our shortcomings, divine compassion surpasses them infinitely.

No matter how frequently we are rejected, we will never relinquish hope. We will persist in imploring God for forgiveness, for we recognize His loving and forgiving nature.

وَ لا كَفَفْتُ عَنْ تَمَلُّقِكَ بِجُودِكَ وَ كَرَمِكَ؛
وَ أَنْتَ الفاعِلُ لِما تَشاءُ، تُعَذِّبُ مَنْ تَشاءُ بِما تَشاءُ كَيْفَ تَشاءُ وَ تَرْحَمُ مَنْ تَشاءُ بِما تَشاءُ كَيْفَ تَشاءُ.

أَنْتَ الفاعِلُ لِما تَشاءُ.

You, O God, act according to Your will. You punish whom You will and how You will and show mercy to whom You will and how You will.

تُعَذِّبُ مَنْ تَشاءُ بِما تَشاءُ.

You punish whomever You will, to whatever extent You will, with whatever You will, and in whatever manner.

تَرْحَمُ مَنْ تَشاءُ بِما تَشاءُ كَيْفَ تَشاءُ.

You extend Your mercy to whomever You will, in whatever manner You will, and to whatever extent.

O Divine, we are Your frail servants and implore You for Your grace. You have proclaimed that this is permissible, that the bridge to truth is through allegory. We embrace the symbolic, so do not place us amongst those You chastise, but rather amongst those You embrace with compassion. We know that all matters are within Your domain, that You resolve all tribulations, and that all mercy flows from You. You merely seek a pretext, and we have presented ourselves as a pretext. Hence, please have mercy on us!

O Divine, may You bring us under the embrace of Your mercy to the extent You desire and in the manner You choose. May You make these allegorical expressions of ours a bridge to the truth. Ultimately, may You make the culmination of these discussions the attainment of Your station of power) and station of greatness. May You not judge us by our actions but rather let Your boundless generosity, mercy, and compassion, which encompass even the sinners, encompass us as well. May You bring us out of the confines of limitations and specificities to the station of power and spaciousness and expansion and to the station of the infinite Names and Attributes of Yours. Let us be annihilated in Your sacred Essence. In all worlds, may You not abandon us to ourselves.

بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ الطّاهِرينَ، وَ صَلِّ عَلىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ الطَّيِّبين.

By the truth of Muhammad and his pure family, send blessings upon him and his pure family.

Session Eight: The absolute sovereignty of God and his existential permeation of the worlds of being

أعوذُ باللهِ مِنَ الشّيطانِ الرّجيم
بسمِ اللهِ الرّحمنِ الرّحيم
و صلّى اللهُ علىٰ محمّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرينَ
و لعنةُ اللهِ علىٰ أعدائهم أجمعينَ.

The Negation of Accountability, Conflict, Polytheism, Contradiction, and Objection to God's Governance

لا تُسألُ عن فعلِكَ، و لا تُنازَعُ فی مُلکِکَ، و لا تُشارَکُ فی أمرِکَ، و لا تُضادُّ فی حُکمِکَ، و لا یَعترِضُ علَیکَ أحدٌ فی تدبیرِکَ، لکَ الخلقُ و الأمرُ تبارکَ اللهُ ربُّ العالمینَ.

O God, it is not befitting anyone's ability or power to question Your work, ask the cause of Your action, or object to Your action and hold You accountable. No one has such power.

This [phrase] is taken from the noble verse of the Holy Quran which says:

لا يسأل عما يفعل وهم يسألون.[145]

He is not questioned about what He does; they will be asked.

Why is a person questioned for the action he does? Human actions are evaluated against a standard of truth or correctness. Aligning with this standard exempts one from questioning and accountability. Conversely, deviations invite scrutiny and consequences. God's actions are inherently aligned with truth, rendering the concept of "falsehood" inapplicable. Therefore, questioning wouldn't hold relevance.

Unlike humans, God lacks external needs or desires. He doesn't require benefits or act for external considerations. This eliminates the potential for conflicting interests and ethical concerns, negating the need for accountability in the human sense.

All conceivable benefits fall within the scope of God's Will and Essence.

Due to God's essence's inherently true and necessarily existent nature, any action from Him possesses the same qualities. Consequently, questioning such actions lacks legitimacy, as they represent the infallible expression of absolute truth and being.

و لا تُنازَعُ فی مُلکِکَ.

No one can dispute Your dominion and kingship.

Any potential challenger to Your reign and power must exist in one of three positions: equal, superior, or inferior. No other possibility exists. However, postulating an equal challenger immediately renders the challenge invalid. It necessitates believing in a being coequal to God in power, knowledge, life, and attributes—essentially another God. This directly contradicts the very concept of Your singular dominion and absolute power. Postulating such an entity becomes an exercise in logical absurdity.

The Doubt of Ibn Kammuna and Its Answer

The doubt of Ibn Kammuna: You say that the One and Necessary Being, God, governs the entire world with His attributes and names. What is the harm in assuming another god with all these characteristics and that both share in the governance of this world, each independently?[146]

Several responses have been proposed to address this doubt,[147] But the most comprehensive and well-founded one rests on divine unity. By asserting God's oneness, we inherently refute the possibility of another divine being. This stems from the fundamental understanding of God's absolute infinity, encompassing His Essence, Attributes, and Names. This infinity signifies an unbounded and unconditioned existence, transcending any limitations or restrictions.

We can illustrate this through a hypothetical proposition: Consider the first God, whose existence, knowledge, life, and power are infinitely expansive. If true, such a God would necessarily encompass all existence, including any potential "other god." Consequently, the existence of another distinct deity becomes logically inconceivable. Conversely, if the first God's power is not all-encompassing, its limitations would create a boundary with another hypothetical god's domain. However, this would contradict the initial premise of absolute infinity, rendering the second deity finite and, therefore, not truly divine.

Several philosophical arguments posit that a being with limitations possesses an essence inherently linked to the realm of possibility, which renders it incompatible with absolute existence.[148]

Hajj Sabziwari's Argument Regarding Essence and Causality in God

In theological discourse, Haji Sabzewari argues that:

الحَقّ ماهيّته إنّيّته   اذ مُقتَضى العُروض معلوليّته.[149]

God's essence and being are identical to His "thatness" and existence. Assuming an essence separate from this fundamental essence-existence would imply that this additional essence is an attribute or "accident" attached to existence. Such an attribute inherently requires a cause, implying God is an effect rather than the ultimate cause.

The Uniqueness of God and the Impossibility of Another: A Response to Ibn Kammuna

The doctrine of divine unity affirms God's singular existence and precludes the conceptualization or imaginability of any other being existing independently alongside Him. This arises from His inherent infinitude, encompassing all aspects of Being. Therefore, the challenge posed by Ibn Kammuna—that two equally powerful and all-encompassing deities could coexist—can only be resolved by recognizing God's infinite and necessary nature. If He were not infinite, He would be contingent and subject to causality, contradicting His divinity.

God, as the ultimate Creator, transcends any dependence on a cause. His creatorship itself demonstrates the necessitating nature of His existence. This Necessary Being, by definition, is absolute and limitless. Consequently, His existence encompasses and subsumes the hypothetical second god, rendering its separate existence logically untenable.

Essentially, any conceivable instance of existence ultimately falls within the domain of the infinite God. Therefore, the assumption of another deity becomes redundant and incompatible with the core principle of divine oneness.

The argument posits that assuming the existence of another being coexisting with God, even a necessary being, is inherently flawed. Hypothesizing such a being and proposing its conflict with God in matters of dominion and power presents a logical fallacy.

Any entity engaging in a dispute first requires its own established existence. The act of dispute presupposes an already extant entity. If the very concept of an entity's existence contradicts core principles, the notion of it engaging in any form of conflict becomes logically untenable.

This argument applies even if the hypothetical coexisting entity is considered equal or parallel to God. If, however, the hypothetical entity is deemed superior or more powerful than God, the argument against its existence is amplified. Ascribing limitations or a hierarchical power structure to a being deemed absolute and infinite contradicts the very definition of such a being.

The Absurdity of Assuming Two Infinite Beings

The assumption of two infinite beings is inherently illogical and contradicts the fundamental concept of infinity. A God whose essence is necessary and infinite cannot be further attributed with additional qualities. What could exist beyond the infinite? The notion of a being existing "outside" of infinity is logically untenable.

"More" or "Less" is meaningless in infinity. By definition, infinity is boundless

Therefore, asserting that another god exists who is "stronger" than the infinite God implies that the first God is somehow limited, which contradicts the very concept of infinity. Posting a second infinite being above or beyond the first one renders the entire concept of an infinite God meaningless and logically inconsistent.

The Argument Against a Weaker Opponent

Having addressed the two previous categories, we now focus on entities weaker than God and may wish to oppose Him. These entities are possible beings created by God. Without being a creature, no being can be considered weaker than God. An independent being not created by God and existing in its own right is inconceivable. This is because, by assumption, such a being would be weaker than God in terms of its fundamental existence and attributes, such as knowledge, power, and life. Being weaker implies being limited by a specific boundary.

If such a being were not limited, it would be infinite and therefore equal to God in rank, contradicting the initial assumption of its being weaker. Thus, any being limited by a boundary is a possible entity, and possibility entails causality. This has been established in transcendental philosophy.[150]

The consequence of possibility is causality. Every possible being is caused and not self-existent. It is impossible for a possible being to be infinite. A specific boundary limits all possible beings. Therefore, the entity we have assumed to be weaker than God is a creature of God.

It is inconceivable for a creature of God to oppose Him

Opposition entails confrontation. Just as creatures depend on a cause for their initial existence, they also rely on a cause for their continued existence. The influx of His existence constantly sustains the beings God created. If this influx were to terminate for even a moment, they would cease to exist. All creatures are utterly dependent on God for their existence and continued being. Therefore, the notion of them opposing Him is fundamentally illogical. Therefore,

المُمكِنُ كما يَحتاج فى أصل وُجوده إلى المؤثِّر، يَحتاج فى بَقائِهِ إلى المؤثِّر أيضًا.[151]

Such a creature would draw its strength from God even in opposition. How, then, can this be considered genuine opposition?

At best, it would be a superficial illusion of opposition. The creature would receive power and strength from God while attempting to struggle against Him. This struggle would occur within God's dominion, under His rule, and within His grasp. It would be entirely subject to His will and decree. Therefore, the view of a creature opposing God is ultimately an illusion. There can be no genuine opposition in this scenario.[152]

وَ لا تُنازَعُ فی مُلکِکَ.

The Harmony of Reason and Intuition

Jurisprudence, or the study of Islamic law, is based on three pillars: 1. Shariah and Ta'abbud, which refer to the teachings and traditions transmitted by the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams. 2. Reason or philosophical inquiry and logical arguments to establish religious beliefs. The Quran encourages Muslims to engage in reflection and to seek knowledge. 3. Intuition or the inner knowledge and direct experience of the heart. It is a source of guidance and insight that can complement revelation and reason.[153]

Rejecting Shariah and reason, one can still arrive at the truth through introspection and the heart's inner light.

It is truly remarkable how the three pillars of Islamic jurisprudence—Shariah, reason, and intuition —work together harmoniously to produce a coherent and comprehensive law system.[154]

The Inconceivability of a Partner in God's Lordship

وَ لا تُشارَکُ فی أمرِکَ.

Since opposition to God's rule is inconceivable, so is the notion of a partner in His lordship.

ألا له الخلق والأمر تبارك الله رب العالمين.[155]

To Him belongs creation and command. Blessed is God, the Lord of the Worlds.

Having established that opposition to God's will and command is inconceivable, the concept of a partner in His will and command is also unthinkable. For a being to be a partner in God's will and command, it would have

to be either equal to Him, superior to Him, or inferior to Him. However, all these possibilities are false.

The Absence of Contradiction in Divine Decrees

وَلا تَضادَّ في حُكمِك.

We should address the theological concept of the coherence and consistency of God's decrees.

Divine pronouncements are inherently free from contradiction. Human error can lead to seemingly contradictory pronouncements, either due to insufficient information at the outset or later recognition of inconsistencies necessitating revisions. However, divine decrees transcend such limitations. They are not products of deliberation or subject to change. Instead, they stem directly from God's perfect will, identical to His essence, pure and *Basīṭ*(uncompounded, with a unified and indivisible essence).

Divine decrees are not separate from God's will and intention. They are not the result of deliberation or calculation but rather a spontaneous manifestation of His infinite being. God's will, His decrees, and their realization in the world are interconnected. There is no gap between these elements. They are all part of a single, unified reality. This understanding is rooted in the fundamental principle of God's pure and *Basīṭ* existence. As an infinite and limitless being, His decrees are free from internal or external contradictions.

Divine decrees are all manifestations of God's unchanging essence

Divine rulings can be categorized into two types: legislative rulings (ahkam tashri'i) that guide human behavior, such as the prohibition of theft or the obligation of prayer, and creational rulings (ahkam takwini) that govern the natural world, such as the laws of physics or the growth of plants. However, this distinction does not imply any fundamental difference between the two types of rulings. Both legislative and creational rulings ultimately express God's perfect will and wisdom. The Rulings of the Lord are One.

The Compatibility of Abrogation with the Absence of Contradiction in Divine Rulings

Abrogation refers to the replacement of one divine ruling with another. This can happen for several reasons, such as a change in circumstances or a new revelation from God. Abrogation does not contradict the principle of the absence of contradiction in divine rulings. This is because each verdict is issued in response to specific circumstances. When those circumstances change, the ruling may no

longer be applicable. For example, In normal circumstances, eating carrion is prohibited. However, it is permitted in a situation of extreme necessity, such as when a person's life is in danger. This does not constitute a contradiction. The prohibition of eating carrion is still in effect in normal circumstances. Permission to eat carrion in extreme necessity is a temporary exception made in response to specific circumstances.

The difference between prayer in a state of travel (salat al-qasr) and prayer in a state of residence (salat al-tamam)

In a state of travel, Muslims are permitted to shorten their prayers. However, in a state of residence, they must pray the whole prayer. These two rulings do not contradict each other. The permission to shorten prayers in a state of travel is a temporary exception made in response to the specific travel circumstances.

The difference between primary rulings (ahkam al-awwaliyyah) and secondary rulings (ahkam al-thaniyyah)

Primary rulings are those that apply in general circumstances. Secondary rulings are those that apply in exceptional circumstances. These rulings do not contradict each other. Secondary rulings are temporary exceptions to primary rulings in response to specific circumstances. Therefore, there is no contradiction in God's rulings.[156]

The reason why creatures cannot object to God

وَ لا يَعتَرِضُ عَلَيكَ أحَدٌ فى تَدبيرِكَ.

No one can object to You in Your governance!

Examining all beings, from the humblest to the most esteemed, from those bound to earthly concerns to those reaching for a higher purpose, one finds no entity capable of questioning the fundamental principles governing existence. This is not reasonable! Because the very act of objecting is itself subject to Your governance! After all, Your governance is like Your other attributes and names; any bounds do not limit it.

Suppose we argue that Your authority, O God, is limited by the possibility of individual objection, and such an objection can override Your will. In that case, we must conclude that Your authority has boundaries and is not absolute. However, we also believe that Your authority, like Your knowledge and power, is limitless. Therefore, we must reconcile these two seemingly contradictory statements. We can do so by understanding that even the objection is subject to

Your authority. No creature can object to Your will, as any such objection would be futile. It is, therefore, not reasonable for any creature to believe that it can challenge Your authority.

All of these statements are about God's oneness. God is beyond names and forms and infinite in His attributes and essence. If we understand God's infinitude correctly, we can solve all these problems.

The world of existence is the absolute dominion of God

لَکَ الخَلقُ و الأمرُ تبارک اللهُ ربُّ العالمین.

To You belongs all creation and command. Blessed be God, the Lord of the Worlds- both the world of command and the world of creation.

The world of command is the world of the kingdom, both the higher and lower kingdoms. The world of creation is the world of nature and matter. All of these beings belong to You; they are Yours.

Every entity manifested in the realm of existence arises from a unified principle. This principle operates in two complementary ways: creation and command. From the perspective of material composition and physical laws, it appears as creation. From its fundamental essence and underlying order, it seems like a command. These are not separate entities but different interpretations of the same underlying reality.

The two worlds of command and creation, the world of dominion and the world of the kingdom, the world of meaning and matter, and the world of abstraction and the world of limitation are all different ways of describing the same thing. They all belong to You. This is an exact statement.

Saying that something belongs to God means it is entirely under His control. In this world of creation, everything that exists belongs to God. There is nothing that does not belong to Him.

The Attribution of Human Actions to God

What is the nature of our actions? Do they truly belong to us? If we can prove that we have an independent agency and can perform actions of our own volition, then we must be granted a degree of autonomy. However, this would contradict the notion of determinism, which posits that all events are predetermined and that we have no free will.

Determinism holds that humans have no free will in their actions and that our actions are simply the necessary consequences of our existence. This view can be compared to the smell of a flower, which is an inherent property of the flower and cannot be separated from it.[157]

However, this view is flawed. Humans possess free will, an essential part of our nature. To deny free will is to deny a fundamental aspect of human existence.

To escape determinism, we turn to the idea of delegation. We say that God created us and gave us power, and then we go about our lives like a clock wound up and left to run.

The Flawed Arguments of Determinism and Delegation and the Validity of the Intermediate Command

The late scholar Haj Ridha Hamadani, despite being an Islamic jurist who typically does not delve into philosophical and wisdom matters, makes a compelling argument.

He states, "Those who subscribe to the concept of delegation are essentially saying no more than this: 'God created us and entrusted us with His command. '"Delegation implies that God created us and then ceded control to us. Our actions and deeds are solely ours, each rooted in our existence.[158]

This argument is also flawed. The God who created us sustains our existence in every aspect - essence, attribute, action, origin, and permanence. To suggest that He relinquishes control at any point implies a weakness in His omnipotence, which is inconceivable. Therefore, God's possibilities, including their essence, attributes, actions, origin, and sustenance, require an effector. God grants them strength and power, and He has similarly bestowed upon us strength, power, life, knowledge, power, and free will. Yet, even with our free will, we remain within the bounds of His power and might.

A Refined Elucidation of the Theory of "أمرٌ بينَ الأمرَين"

Our actions hold a twofold significance: they impact ourselves and a higher purpose. This concept can be likened to light refracting through the crystals of a chandelier, creating a vibrant spectrum of colors. Without the light, these colors wouldn't appear; without the crystals, there would be no medium for refraction. Nonetheless, the colors are inherently linked to the chandelier. Its very design and multifaceted structure necessitates splitting light into various hues. Absent the initial light source, these colors wouldn't exist at all.

Analogously, our actions are both ours and God's. They emanate from our soul and the realm of our being, yet they also originate from God, the fountainhead of all existence. We lack inherent self-sufficiency, rendering the notion of self-sufficient actions untenable. Thus, all realms of existence reside between determinism and free will poles.

Not only humans but also angels, jinn, humans, animals, inanimate objects, air, mountains, the material world, and the spiritual world - all are situated between determinism and free will, between determinism and delegation. In essence, neither determinism nor delegation exists in any of these worlds.

What does exist is that all beings possess two aspects: the divine aspect and the created aspect. This duality gives rise to the concept of "أمرٌ بينَ الأمرَين" (the command between the two commands).

We will not delve into a detailed discussion now but rather provide a brief overview.[159]

Apprehending the Divine Perfections through the Prism of Our Own

O God, all that exists is Yours.

لَكَ الخَلقُ و الأمرُ.

To You belong creation and command. We are utterly unworthy of praising You, for our feeble attempts at extolment fall woefully short of Your true majesty.

آفرینی که این مغفل کرد　　　　روز عیش مرا مبدل کرد.[160]

A fool's mistake, a day in tatters,
Mirth turned to sighs, and happy to shatters.

Our intellect, our capacity for love, and the finite vessel of our being limit our understanding of You. How can our feeble conceptions ever encompass Your infinite essence?

The Eminent Theory of Muhaqqiq Dawani on the Essence of Our Descriptions

In his treatise "Arba'in," the late Shaykh Baha'i (may God have mercy on him) cites a chief concept from one of the great scholars, believed to be Muhaqqiq Dawani. He posits that every attribute we ascribe to God, and by which we glorify Him, finds its prototype and manifestation within our being.[161]

We possess sight, and hence, we proclaim that God, too, is Seeing. We possess knowledge, and thus, we affirm that God is Knowing. We have power, and so we declare that God is Powerful. We possess life, and therefore, we assert that God is Living. However, we perceive these attributes as limited within ourselves, whereas we attribute unlimited power, life, knowledge, hearing, and sight to Him.

Indeed, we have no other recourse, for any being seeking to attain the Necessary Being and the Cause must embark on this journey from the vantage point of its soul and the attributes that establish its being and existence.

How can we be sure that God Most High does not possess other beings within which different sets of attributes and names are manifest, of which we are utterly ignorant? Just as different beings are unaware of each other's existence, each animal possesses unique instincts and attributes. One animal is oblivious to the world of another, as their cognizance is circumscribed by God's attributes and instincts bestowed upon them. The attributes and instincts bestowed upon one animal differ from those of another, rendering each incapable of comprehending the states and experiences of the other. Each of these beings worships God by the attributes it possesses.

The Hadith of Imam Baqir on Our Imperfect Perception of God's Sublime Attributes

In a hadith attributed to Imam Muhammad Baqir (peace be upon him), he states:

كُلُّ مَا مَيَّزْتُمُوهُ بِأَوْهَامِكُمْ بِأَدَقِّ مَعَانِيهِ فَهُوَ مَخْلُوقٌ مِثْلُكُمْ مَرْدُودٌ إِلَيْكُمْ.[162]

All you discern with your intellect, in its most nuances, is a creation akin to yourselves and shall be returned unto you.

Every concept you apprehend through your intellect, even the most nuanced and refined, is a product of your mind, a construct of your thoughts, and belongs solely to you. It does not constitute God. Any attributes you assign to God through your intellect have emerged within your mind and are confined to its limitations. They are mental constructs formulated within your consciousness. Therefore, your intellect's simplistic conclusion is erroneous; it does not represent God.

We possess the attribute of modesty, and so we assert that God is also Modest. This modesty concept has arisen, and we proclaim that God is Modest. Therefore, whatever we conceive concerning the Necessary Being and His attributes is a product of our intellect.

He then states: The tiny ants that walk with two tongues and mandibles may imagine that God also possesses two mandibles! This is because their very existence depends on these two mandibles, which they use to procure sustenance, ward off harm, gather seeds from the ground, and identify predators. The ant's life and perfection are inextricably linked to these two mandibles. Consequently, when an ant endeavors to conceptualize a deity, it naturally conceives of a perfect deity,

not a flawed one. Since the pinnacle of perfection is possessing two mandibles, it inevitably concludes that God must also have two.

If a cow were to conceptualize a supremely magnificent deity, it would undoubtedly conclude that God's horns must be mightier than its own. Similarly, in its attempt to conceptualize a deity, an elephant would assert that the Lord must possess a trunk capable of encircling and lifting the entire earth. Man, on the other hand, who lacks both mandibles and a trunk, where does he perceive his perfection? He attributes it to God, thereby concluding that God must be superior!

The Exaltation of God from All Our Descriptions

سُبْحَٰنَ ٱللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ * إِلَّا عِبَادَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُخْلَصِينَ.[163]

Exalted is Allah, from what they describe, except for the sincere servants of Allah.

While affirming God's omniscience with the title "All-Knowing" becomes an essential act of faith, it must be accompanied by the recognition of His transcendence through the declaration "Subhan Allah" (Exalted is God). Our acts of praise and glorification must inherently acknowledge the limitations of human language in capturing the divine essence. In essence, as we proclaim, "O God, You are All-Knowing," we simultaneously offer an apology, recognizing His ultimate elevation above all earthly concepts and attributions.

Attributing the name "All-Knowing" to God reflects our understanding of His essence through the lens of knowledge. However, this conceptualization separates knowledge from power, implying a distinction that does not exist within the divine essence. While we use titles like "Center of Knowledge" and "Center of Power" to express God's absolute attributes, these are limitations of human language. In reality, His essence transcends such compartmentalization.

Within the divine essence, titles and names dissolve. Here, the "Center of Power" transcends the mere concept of "powerful," and the "Center of Knowledge" surpasses the limitation of "all-knowing." Similarly, the "Truth of Life" exists beyond the label "al-Hayy" (the Living). In this realm devoid of names and forms, the human capacity for imagination falls short. How can we possibly conceive of a God so transcendent?

Even if it pursued an understanding of God tirelessly until the Day of Judgment, the human intellect would ultimately prove incapable of capturing the divine essence through rational thought alone. Like the legendary phoenix,

unconfined by mortal snares, the true nature of God eludes the grasp of our limited intellectual frameworks. No matter how meticulously we construct our conceptual traps, seeking to ensnare the divine through reason, ultimate comprehension remains out of reach.

عُنقا شکار کَس نشود دام بازگیر.[164]

Distinguishing Human Limitations from Prophetic Knowledge in Recognizing God's Essence

How can we attain knowledge of God? Should we simply abandon the pursuit entirely, settling for the rudimentary understanding shared by the masses? Is it acceptable to reason that humans are inherently incapable of truly knowing God, His attributes, and names, thus justifying our focus on worldly affairs? Conversely, should we remain content with a surface-level understanding – acknowledging the existence of a single, eternal, and self-sufficient God while remaining confined to these basic concepts? Alternatively, should we openly admit our intellectual limitations in comprehending the divine? However, it is crucial to understand that this confession of human helplessness differs fundamentally from the acknowledgment of restriction made by the prophets and saints, who stand at the pinnacle of faith.

ما عَبَدناكَ حَقّ عِبادَتِک![165] ما عَرَفناكَ حَقَّ مَعرِفَتِک.[166]

A vast gulf separates the two realizations of helplessness. The first, a general understanding of our limitations, only occurs after achieving maqam al-liqa' (the station of encounter) and comprehending tawḥīd (the Oneness of God). Until an individual sheds even the slightest remnants of their individual being and personal ego, the path to God's divine court and the ḥaram kabīriyya (sanctuary of majesty) remains eternally barred. This is the crux of the matter!

The Purifying Approach in the Holy Quran

According to some, the Holy Quran utilizes a method known as "burning" to guide and refine human beings.[167] This approach entails confronting individuals with misconceptions and limitations and removing false beliefs and desires hindering spiritual progress. However, it's crucial to distinguish this process from despair. While challenging existing thought patterns can feel unsettling, it is ultimately intended to illuminate the path toward genuine self-improvement. The "burning" approach seeks to refine and elevate our thinking by aligning it with the wisdom and light found within the Quran.

قَيمَةُ المَرء ما يُحسِنُه.[168]

The value of a man is determined by his knowledge and understanding.

Humans often navigate existential crossroads where their existing thought patterns and life strategies seem inadequate to achieve their aspirations. This realization can usher in a period of intense vulnerability and despair. Such helplessness can, however, act as a catalyst for personal transformation, akin to letting go of a cherished ice cube that melts en route home. The initial loss stings, mirroring the vanishing essence of the ice's coolness, but it also opens the way for embracing a new perspective and seeking alternative tools for success.

In the face of the Divine Essence and Its Majesty, no being can assert its existence.

تا یک سر مویی در تو هستی باقیست — آئین دکان خودپرستی باقیست.
گفتی بُت پندار شکستم رَستم — این بت که ز پندار برَستم باقیست.[169]

While a strand of self-conceit remains,

The mirror of self-worship sustains.

You claimed to have shattered the idol of pride,

Yet the idol of self-deception still abides.

Before the boundless essence and infinite majesty of the Divine, the very concept of a separate, self-assertive existence dissolves. An individual might declare, "I have transcended mere conjecture," believing they've attained a state where intellect cannot apprehend God. However, such a realization arises from within the framework of existence, implying the thinker's being as the foundation for the thought. This becomes an idol, an intellectual construct demanding deconstruction. This is where the matter grows nuanced and potentially unsettling, for it necessitates relinquishing the comfort of seeking ultimate understanding through our limited human faculties.

An Example of the Struggle of the Prophet Moses and the Prophet Muhammad in the Path of Knowledge

The Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) prayed and fasted for thirty nights. He did not eat, drink, or sleep.[170] Even then, his work was not finished. God extended his appointment for another ten nights, making it forty nights in total.

The sermon of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (peace be upon him), in Nahj al-Balaghah, states that his food was the leaves of trees. Due to his extreme thinness and the wasting away of his flesh, the green leaves of the trees were visible from the skin of his stomach![171]

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) undertook a significant journey, leaving behind his hometown of Mecca, his family, and his familiar surroundings. He departed from his tribe, his beloved wife, his supportive uncle Abu Talib, his place of worship, and the comfort of his home. His destination was Mount Hira's peak, a lonely and perilous location. Birds or wildlife rarely frequented this remote mountain, and its challenging terrain discouraged most visitors.

The Prophet's choice of Mount Hira was a deliberate act. He yearned for solitude and seclusion, where he could commune with his inner self without external distractions. Historical accounts suggest he would spend extended periods, ranging from a week to ten days, in the cave located on this mountain. [172] What inspired the Prophet to seek such profound isolation on Mount Hira?

Does this make sense or not? This melts away existence! The more man struggles to grasp God, the more he sees that his grasp is futile. He flails his hands and feet like a drowning man being swept away by a flood. He desperately tries to cling to this wall or that, but the flood carries him away. He tries this plank or that, but they, too, are swept away.

A drowning man will clutch at any weed!

He sees a small driftwood floating on the water and thinks it will save him.

الغَرِيقُ يَتَشَبَّثُ بِكُلِّ حَشِيش.[173]

Imagine a desperate individual adrift in a raging current, clinging to a small piece of driftwood for survival. Despite their emotional struggle, the driftwood offers no lasting hope, just as futile as our attempts to capture the essence of God with finite human understanding. We understand the futility of approaching the Divine through preconceived notions and philosophical frameworks.

فصلٌ فى العلم، فصلٌ فى القدرة، فصلٌ فى الحياة.

It compares these attempts to different chapters in a classroom, each valid within its limited scope but ultimately insufficient for grasping the vastness of the Divine reality.

Imam Sadiq's (peace be upon him) Advice to Abdul Aziz on Observing the Levels of Faith

In a statement attributed to Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him), he instructs Abdul Aziz: Faith is a journey with ten distinct levels, each requiring mastery before progressing to the next. Do not attempt to elevate someone to a higher level before completing the previous step. Such an action would be akin to breaking them. Just

as a fractured bone necessitates medical intervention to heal properly, a broken faith similarly requires repair and support.[174]

Taking someone abruptly from the initial stages of belief to advanced levels can shatter their faith and destroy their spiritual journey. The tenth level is where the wayfarer is entirely immersed [in God's Essence]. It is a place where Salman becomes.

سلمانُ منّا أهلَ البيت.[175]

He becomes from the Ahl al-Bayt, and his color of self disappears.

صِبْغَةَ ٱللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ عَٰبِدُونَ.[176]
لَکَ الخلقُ و الأمرُ تبارک اللهُ ربُّ العالمین.

Any attempt to define the divine through human words ultimately becomes a reflection of ourselves rather than an objective description. Just as praising the sun ultimately reflects on the observer, so are our attempts to define God.

مادح خورشید مدّاح خود است.[177]

The one who praises the sun is praising himself.

Defining God through human language is ultimately an exercise in self-definition, not an objective exploration of the Divine essence.

Merely describing the sun's light, heat, and gravity based on our observations provides an incomplete picture of its vastness. Similarly, our attempts to describe God are inevitably limited by our understanding and fall short of encompassing the entirety of the Divine reality. By claiming "the sun is good," the observer is merely projecting their interpretation onto the sun, not accessing its intrinsic nature. Similarly, when we praise God, we emphasize qualities that resonate with our values and experiences.

سبحانَ ربّیَ العظیم و بحمده، سبحانَ ربّیَ الأعلی و بحمده.
وَيُسَبِّحُ ٱلرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِۦ وَٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِۦ.[178]

While angels sing hymns of perfect praise, even the roar of thunder, in its attempt to glorify God, falls short. Its booming declaration, "What a God!" quickly gives way to "Forgive me!" for it recognizes the inadequacy of human language to encompass the divine. Like mine, even the sincerest human praise can only be offered with the humbling acknowledgment: "Subhan Allah! You are far above our limited words and descriptions. You transcend our attempts to praise or define You."

Proper understanding of the divine eludes all but the most devoted souls. But the drowning man, in his final moments, glimpses God's immensity. Paralyzed by

the current, his body ravaged by the storm, he comprehends the true power of flood, sea, and hail. The terror of death grips him, revealing the vastness of existence beyond his grasp.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ. إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ.[179]

Beyond the reach of any mortal tongue, God transcends all descriptions uttered by mere describers. Only the hearts of His truly devoted servants, cleansed by sincerity and piety, can approach the ineffable.

Mere sincerity falls short in describing the Divine. Only those utterly consumed by their devotion, those who have "drowned" in their surrender, possess this ability.

For the seeker striving to reach God, a constant struggle persists. They purify themselves, refining their sincerity, yet remain bound by their actions. These efforts are pale tools like hands and feet attempting to scale a mountain. The aspiring soul cries out, "Forgive me, God! I cannot reach You with this limited self. My actions, ordinary fingernails against a mountain, cannot grasp Your immensity."

Yet, a transformation occurs when surrender replaces striving, when the self dissolves in devotion, transcending simple sincerity. Free from the devil's influence, spared the Day of Judgment's reckoning, they become one with the Divine. Only then can they speak of God, not through earthly description, but with the ineffable understanding born of complete immersion.

Why can a perfect mystic describe the Divine? Because he has transcended individuality, dissolving into the boundless ocean of God's essence. Just as a raindrop merging with the vast sea becomes indistinguishable from it, so does the devotee who loses self in the divine. Annihilated within the sacred presence, he ceases to be a separate entity. His descriptions cease to be his pronouncements and, instead, become echoes of the Divine itself.

This is not mere metaphorical exaggeration. The proper understanding of the Divine transcends human language and comprehension. It's an experience of oneness, where boundaries between self and God dissolve, and any articulation of that experience becomes, in essence, a reflection of the Divine itself.[180]

The Commander of the Faithful transcends his earthly identity (Ali) to embody divine attributes like God's hand and eye. [181] If Ali remains as Ali, then there would be no God. God is infinite! God's essence is infinite and cannot be added to. The analogy of adding numbers to infinity illustrates this point.

Whatever is added to God is infinite; one plus infinity is infinity, ten plus infinity is infinity, and any number plus infinity is infinity. Even attributing divine characteristics doesn't diminish God's infinite nature. Thus, attempting to describe God through language is ultimately limiting.

تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ.[182]

Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

Quran recounts the creation of humankind through the divine voice (tabarakallah- تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ), which translates to "Most Blessed is God." Tabarak carries various meanings, including exalted, blessed, merciful, possessing high status, and wielding immense power. God, as "Lord of the Worlds," encompasses both the physical realm of creation and the unseen realm of command and decree.

مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ.[183]
لَيسَ فِى الدارِ غَيرُهُ دَيَّارٌ !

His scrolls are in his right hand.

There is no inhabitant in the house except him!

Sayyid Ahmad Karbalaei was a highly respected scholar. He studied under the late Akhund Mullah Husayn Quli Hamadani, a prominent figure in Najaf. I once inquired of the late Haj Aqa Buzurg Tihrani (may his soul rest in peace) about his acquaintance with Sayyid Ahmad Karbalaei. I asked, "Did you have the opportunity to meet him? Can you tell me about him?" Haj Aqa Buzurg Tihrani responded with a touch of amusement, "What are you referring to? How can that be possible?" He then explained, "Sayyid Ahmad passed away some time ago. After his death, I saw him in a dream one night. It was then that I realized he was no longer among the living. In the dream, I firmly grasped his index finger and implored him, 'Tell me about the spiritual states and advancements God has bestowed upon you.'" Haj Aqa Buzurg Tihrani continued, "With a hearty laugh, Sayyid Ahmad pulled his finger away and said cryptically, 'The sweetness and delight of halva cannot be truly understood until it is tasted.'"[184]

بِمحمَّدٍ و آلهِ الطّاهرينَ و صلِّ علىٰ محمّدٍ و آلهِ اجمعينَ.

By Muhammad and his pure family, and may God bless Muhammad and his family.

أعوذ بالله من الشّيطان الرّجيم
بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم
و صلّى الله على خير خلقه و أشرف بريّته محمّد و آله الطيّبين الطّاهرين
و لعنة الله على أعدائهم اجمعين.

يا ربِّ هذا مقامُ من لاذ بك و استجار بكرمك و ألف إحسانك و نعمك و أنت الجوادُ الّذى لا يضيقُ عفوك و لا ينقصُ فضلك و لا تقلّ رحمتك و قد توثّقنا منك بالصّفح القديم و الفضل العظيم و الرّحمة الواسعة.

O my Lord! This is the station of one who has taken refuge in You, found shelter in Your mercy, and become attached to the kindness that You have bestowed upon him and the blessings that You have given him.

The Station of Supplication and Refuge of the Servant in the Words of Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him)

This is a station where the Imam himself (peace be upon him), in a state of renunciation, petition, supplication, and humility, was engaged in prayer to the Lord, and he remembered The Exalted God with attributes. The shortcomings and deficiencies that arise from the servant about what the Lord Most High deserves of his worship and that state of humility and shame that the servant sees in himself refers to this station.

Given my current position, I humbly approach you to seek Your esteemed support. My longstanding familiarity with Your generosity and benevolence inspires me to turn to You in this time of need. I do not come to You impulsively or without reason. Having witnessed Your countless blessings firsthand, I am confident in Your merciful and compassionate nature. Therefore, I respectfully seek Your refuge, not as someone demanding an equal footing, but as one who humbly kneels before Your greatness. I firmly believe that a leader of Your stature embodies the noble quality of providing sanctuary to those who seek it. Having entrusted myself to Your guidance, I have complete faith that You will not turn me away in my hour of need.

The Deer Seeking Refuge: A Story of Kindness and Resilience

During our studies in Qum roughly 32 years ago, a harsh winter blanketed the region with heavy snowfall. Visibility vanished even in city streets as snowdrifts piled high. This harshness extended to the wildlife, leaving deer desperate for food. Hunters capitalized on this vulnerability, seeking easy prey weakened by the winter's grip.

One tale from this time stands out: In a village between Qum and Tehran, a large herd of hungry deer stumbled upon a caravanserai, seeking refuge from the harsh elements and hunters alike. The owner, a man of remarkable compassion, witnessed their plight and acted swiftly. He secured the caravanserai, ensuring the deer's safety, and provided them with much-needed food and water.

This act of kindness wasn't temporary. Even after the snow melted, the owner kept the deer safe, offering them shelter until they regained strength. Despite the high prices hunters offered for such desperate prey, he resisted all temptations. His belief in their right to freedom and life outweighed any potential profit.

The Granting of Refuge Supersedes Punishment: An Exploration of Moral Obligations

The concept of *istijārah*, or seeking refuge, carries significant ethical implications. When an individual extends refuge to another, offering sanctuary and protection, it inherently creates a moral obligation that transcends punishment and revenge.

Imagine a scenario where someone seeks refuge with another individual. Instead of fulfilling their duty to provide safety, food, and protection, the host inflicts harm upon the refugees by physically assaulting them or stealing their belongings. Such actions directly contradict the fundamental principles of seeking and granting refuge.

This moral tenet manifests in various cultures worldwide. Notably, Arabian customs traditionally dictate that even someone who has committed a crime or a mistake is granted a reprieve from punishment upon seeking refuge. As long as they remain protected, any retribution is suspended.

Seeking Sanctuary: The Legacy of Basṭ in Islamic Shrines

Basṭ, a designated refuge space, holds historical significance within specific Islamic shrines. In the case of the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), the basṭs surrounding the upper and lower streets served a crucial purpose. They provided sanctuary to individuals who had committed crimes or faced imminent punishment—entering the basṭ granted temporary immunity, shielding them from retribution until they voluntarily chose to leave.

The principle of "whoever enters it is safe" holds significant meaning in the religious context of Mecca. It grants temporary immunity from punishment for individuals who enter the city's sacred boundaries, even those who have committed serious crimes. This tradition reflects the ideals of sanctuary and the opportunity for spiritual reflection and repentance.

However, it's crucial to understand this immunity's specific context and limitations. While punishment is temporarily suspended, it's not condoned or forgiven. Additionally, access to food and water is not provided, creating a situation that encourages individuals to eventually leave Mecca and face the legal consequences of their actions.

It's important to emphasize that this tradition is not intended to be a haven for criminal activity. The lack of comfort and support aims to discourage individuals from seeking refuge solely to avoid responsibility. Ultimately, they will be held accountable for their actions once they leave the sacred precincts.

هذا مقامُ مَن لاذَ بک و استَجارَ بِکَرمِک و ألِفَ إحسانَک و نِعَمَک.

Gracious God, if Your blessings and kindness have nurtured us thus far, please do not leave us empty in this hallowed place. For such an act would stand in stark contrast to your infinite mercy. I stand before you, deeply familiar with this sacred ground, almost like a child born within its embrace. Countless blessings have graced my life, and your kindness has become like the air I breathe, no longer new or surprising but ever essential.

The Boundless Ocean of Divine Mercy Cannot Be Diminished by Abundant Generosity and Forgiveness

و أنتَ الجوادُ الّذی لا یَضیقُ عفوُک و لا تَنقُصُ فضلُک و لا تَقِلَّ رحمتُک.

The Exalted God, we seek refuge in your boundless grace. You are not a deity limited by stinginess, greed, or ignorance. You are the embodiment of generosity, whose munificence knows no bounds. You draw forth clouds laden with rain, nourishing the earth with an abundance that overflows into rivers, seas, and oceans. Your mercy is so vast that its immensity surpasses human comprehension. You shower countless blessings upon all your creation – plants, animals, humans, and unseen beings. Your generosity remains limitless, even as your forgiveness remains boundless.

Unlike the absolute nature of divine forgiveness, human forgiveness is often conditional and susceptible to erosion. For instance, individuals may readily

forgive minor transgressions like verbal insults or physical altercations. However, egregious acts, such as harming a child, may push the boundaries of human forgiveness, potentially leading to considerations of revenge. Thus, human forgiveness operates within a finite spectrum, subject to individual thresholds and the severity of the transgression.

In contrast, divine forgiveness transcends earthly limitations. It is characterized by its boundless nature, operating entirely free from restrictions or constraints. This inherent difference underlines the distinction between human and divine spheres, highlighting the infinite capacity for grace and mercy attributed to the Exalted God.

Oh God, Your generosity knows no bounds, for You are both the ultimate Giver and the ultimate Forgiver.

لا يَضيقُ عفوُكَ.

Your forgiveness does not diminish.

The immensity of Your generosity, O God, expands even to embracing Your boundless forgiveness. Forgiving is one facet of Your multifaceted grace, intrinsically linked to Your nature. Individuals whose hearts resonate with Your generosity readily extend forgiveness, mirroring its essence in their actions. Conversely, those devoid of generosity lack the capacity for forgiveness. These interconnected qualities, ingrained within us, reflect the divine essence You embody. You, Oh God, embody unfettered generosity, and Your forgiveness knows no bounds, forever transcending any earthly limitation.

The Metaphor of the Well and the Ocean for the Inexhaustibility of God's Mercy

ولا يَنقُصُ فضلُكَ.

Your grace, O God, is never diminished, no matter how much you give.

The boundless ocean of divine grace offers an inexhaustible wellspring of blessings. Whether we seek forgiveness, solace, or the fulfillment of our aspirations, drawing from this infinite source never diminishes its abundance.

Consider not a finite basin but a spring connected to a vast, unseen reservoir. Regardless of how much we draw, the well remains full, replenished by an ever-flowing source of generosity. This infinite bounty reflects the limitless treasures of God's love, always available to those who seek it.

Divine grace resembles a bountiful wellspring, eternally brimming with blessings regardless of how much you draw from it. Choosing not to partake does

not preserve the abundance; it merely deprives you of its inherent benefits. You might fear depletion, thinking, "If I donate here, it will be gone!" Yet, your contribution won't diminish the resource like the well replenishing after each draw. Just as the water level remains constant, divine grace persists undiminished. The distinction lies in the flow. Actively engaging with grace draws fresh blessings, keeping them vibrant. Stagnancy results when unutilized, causing the potential to diminish. Remember, your participation doesn't threaten the well's abundance; it ensures a dynamic cycle of generosity and fulfillment.

Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) says:

تنزل المعونه على قدر الموونه.[186]

Divine assistance descends in proportion to the burden.

God's grace empowers individuals to handle their unique challenges. Every individual faces burdens and receives support commensurate with their specific needs. Regardless of the magnitude of a difficulty, divine aid ensures the means to confront it.

Holding off on having children solely due to concerns about increased needs reflects a lack of faith in God's boundless provision. Just as He provides for every creature, He extends His blessings and support to those undertaking new responsibilities, including parenthood. This notion is considered a dire offense against God, conscience, blessings, and instinct.

لا يَنقُصُ فضلُک.

Consider a scenario where an individual is entrusted with distributing communal resources, like the funds of a mosque organization. This responsibility necessitates impartiality and conscientious administration. The entrusted individual serves as a conduit, channeling resources rather than acting as a personal benefactor. The funds belong to God, not the individual.

The resources available often exist within a sustainable system, replenished through community support or established mechanisms. The focus should be on equitable distribution, not personal hoarding.

The individual's role is primarily administrative, ensuring resources reach those in need. Holding onto resources based on personal anxieties creates an unethical barrier to the intended beneficiaries.

ولله ملك السماوات والأرض.[187]
لله ما في السماوات والأرض.[188]

Allah owns the dominion of the heavens, earth, and everything in them.

We know these things, yet we still fall short in our spending and in clear and defined matters.

Distinguishing Miserliness from Greed. A Look at the Miser's Psyche

There is a fundamental distinction between miserliness and greed. Greed is often characterized by an insatiable desire for personal gain, leading individuals to amass wealth without necessarily being averse to spending it on themselves. Miserliness, however, paints a different picture. A miser not only exhibits a reluctance to pay but also harbors a deep-seated aversion to seeing others enjoy material benefits.

ومن يوق شح نفسه فأولئك هم المفلحون.[189]

Success and salvation are available to those who are safe from the stinginess of the nafs (that is, from avarice).

Embracing openness and generosity nourishes the soul and unlocks its potential. Just as flowing water remains clean and vibrant, a life characterized by giving and sharing fosters personal growth and well-being; this principle resonates with scientific observations; studies suggest turbulent environments can purify water by eliminating potential contaminants. Conversely, stagnant environments become susceptible to decay and deterioration.

Wealth belongs to God. It comes from one place and goes to another. Man is neither the owner of the kingdom nor the King of Kings! Yet he claims to be the King of Kings and the owner of all wealth, and he deceives himself.

وَ لا تَقِلُ رحمتُک.

And Your mercy does not diminish either.

اللهُمَّ إنّی أسألُکَ برحمتِک الّتی وَسِعَتْ کُلَّ شَیء.[190]

O Allah, I ask You by Your mercy, which encompasses everything.

Forgiveness is the hallmark of greatness

و قد تَوَثَّقنا منکَ بالصَّفحِ القدیم و الفضلِ العظیم و الرحمةِ الواسعة.

The Exalted Being, we turn to You with conviction, our hearts seeking solace in Your benevolence. We entrust our worries and vulnerabilities and are confident in Your understanding and compassion. This capacity for forgiveness is not born

anew but has always been Your defining strength, a testament to Your immensity. In Your vastness, we find solace and hope.

Individuals who lack a strong personality may exhibit aggression in response to perceived slights or challenges to their private interests. Conversely, those with high traits are less likely to be easily provoked or discomposed.

How immense is the power of The Exalted Divine! His patience transcends imagination! This universe is filled with its bustling inhabitants, a cacophony of sounds, and a burden of transgressions and heinous acts—not just a few, but countless! All these created beings, including the jinn, disobey their Creator, consume His bounties, and dare to deceive Him. Yet, how grand is His authority? His lordship, benevolence, forgiveness, and timeless grace are boundless. He remains undisturbed, unshaken, and unflinching. He knows these worldly events, these crimes, and these sins cannot tarnish His divine majesty. Never! They pose no threat to His infinite power.

Trust in Your grace and mercy brings comfort and peace to the heart

قديم الصفح.

We have come to know You as the One who is eternally forgiving. Forgiveness is Your nature. Your forgiveness and pardon are not unprecedented; they have a long history.

الفضلِ العظيم .

Your grace is immense.

والرحمةِ الواسعة.

And Your mercy is vast; it is not limited by anything.

وثقنا.

We trust in your words, which means our hearts have found peace here; we are no longer anxious, wavering, or doubtful.

Uncertainty breeds internal conflict. When lacking confidence in a decision, individuals experience a sense of hesitation, constantly questioning the correctness or appropriateness of their actions. Should they pursue this course of action? Is it the optimal choice? This indecision manifests in scenarios like choosing a healthcare provider or undergoing surgery. However, conviction has the power to quell this inner turmoil. By achieving certainty, individuals find solace and steadfastness, the wavering replaced by clarity and resolve. They proceed with reassurance, their anxieties quelled.

أفتُراكَ يا ربِّ تُخلِفُ ظنونَنا أو تُخيِّبُ آمالَنا كلّا يا كريم؟!

O Lord, do You think You will disappoint our expectations or frustrate our hopes? No, never, O Most Generous!

"أ فتَراکَ" is an Arabic phrase that can be translated as "Do you think so?" or "Is that so?" It is used to express doubt or disbelief. In the context of the text, Imam asks God if He thinks He will disappoint His servants' expectations or frustrate their hopes. "أ فتَراکَ" is used here to express astonishment or disbelief. It is as if the Imam is saying, "Is it even conceivable?" or "Is it even possible?"

Could our hopes and dreams concerning Your Most Holy Being possibly result in disappointment and loss? No, never! Not, O Most Generous!

O You who are the Most Generous of all, how could our hopes and dreams concerning You ever lead to disappointment?

فلیس هذا ظنّنا بک و لا هذا فیک طمَعُنا.[191]

O God, the very thought of doubting Your generosity is far from our minds. We hold no desire or expectation that Your infinite grace wouldn't fulfill. Never would we entertain the notion that You would leave our hopes and aspirations unanswered.

[یارب] إنّ لَنا فیک أمَلاً طویلاً کثیراً.

O God, we have long-cherished hopes and aspirations in You. This is just the beginning.

إنّ لَنا فیک رجاءً عظیماً.

We have great hope and trust in You more than anything else.

Our faith in You is sincere in the face of challenges. No single obstacle can extinguish the sincere hope that burns within us. This immense and enduring hope remains undimmed, even without immediate reward. Our trust in You is resolute, a beacon that guides us forward.

عَصَیْناک و نحن نَرجُوا أن تَستُرَ علینا، و دَعَوناک و نحن نَرجُوا أن تَستَجیبَ لنا.

We acknowledge our transgressions—disobedience, rebellion, and sin—yet we harbor a persistent hope, an earnest plea for Your merciful cover over our failings.

فحَقِّق رَجاءَنا مولانا.

Our faith rests on grand aspirations, not the limitations of our actions. Fueled by this immense hope, we declare, "We place tremendous hope in You!

إن لنا فیک رجاءً عظیماً.

With voices echoing the magnitude of our hope, we call upon You, O God! As a consequence of this fervent hope, we anticipate Your immediate response. We proclaim, "O God, answer our pleas and affirm our hope!"

فحقق رجاءنا مولانا.

Our Master, we implore You, "Fulfill this aspiration, strengthen and validate it!"

Acknowledging our limitations, we approach with hopeful anticipation and an honest self-assessment. Past actions hold no significant weight, leaving us with neither accolades nor burdens. Despite our shortcomings, we stand resolute in our dedication to knowledge and great love.

Knowledge, O Divine Source, is my testament to your existence, and my love for you is my advocate before you.

معرفتی یا مولای دلیلی علیک و حبّی لک شفیعی إلیک.[192]

Accepting our fundamental limitations, we stand before you with only two offerings: Love and profound knowledge. Love gives birth to hope, and knowledge strengthens its foundation within us. However, we readily admit our lack of virtuous deeds. It is futile to expect actions from us that could match your divine grace and earn a coveted place in paradise. Such meritorious acts do not reside within our limited being, nor can they be produced from our essence, life frame, or surrounding environment. The core of our selfhood cannot generate actions worthy of Your ultimate satisfaction. Therefore, we release ourselves from the burden of self-achievement and find solace in the pure hope we hold for you, not for our own actions.

فحقق رجاءنا.

With complete submission and acknowledging our absolute dependence, we stand before you, our Master. As servants devoid of agency and autonomy, we rely upon your guidance to fulfill our needs. Every action we undertake stems from your directives, and the responsibility for our journey rests solely upon you. We place our hope in you as we have no other recourse. This hope, rooted in genuine conviction, does not waver but seeks your affirmation and validation. Please solidify and reinforce this hope, not because it is flawed, but to elevate it to its fullest potential.

Your mercy is an overflow, not based on reciprocity or deserving.

فقد علمنا ما نستوجب باعمالنا، و لكن علمك فينا و علمنا بانك لا تصرفنا عنك و ان كنا غير مستوجبين لرحمتك.

Acknowledging our limitations, we stand before you, divine source, having evaluated our deeds and their outcomes. We find ourselves unworthy of the bounties often associated with salvation: divine reward, mercy, and the delights of paradise. We realize that these promises of reward are not earned through our actions but stem from your immense generosity and unyielding grace. This introspection has led us to a deeper understanding of our limitations and dependence on your infinite mercy.

سیه رونی ز ممکن در دو عالم　　　جدا هرگز نشد والله اعلم.[193]

We acknowledge our inherent limitations, flaws, and imperfections. Like coal, sulfur, cast iron, and black iron, we lack the innate brilliance and purity often associated with the path to salvation. We readily admit our shortcomings and limitations. However, we draw solace in your omniscience, for you understand us completely. We find hope in the conviction that you will not abandon us but will continue to guide and embrace us. We trust you will not separate us from your presence or cast us out despite our flaws.

و علمنا بانك لا تصرفنا عنك.

Bound by our inherent dependence, we acknowledge the futility of seeking solace elsewhere. With resolute acceptance, we recognize our sole allegiance and its limitations. This understanding grants us clarity of perspective.

We also recognize our inherent unworthiness of your benevolence. Mercy, by definition, transcends earned reward. Our actions hold no power to compel its bestowal. Instead, your mercy is a boundless effusion, a manifestation of your inherent generosity, not a response to our deeds or an obligation earned through them.

إستوجب و أوجب.

استوجب means "to deserve" or "to be worthy of." وجب means "to be obligatory" or "to be necessary." أوجب means "to make obligatory" or "to cause to be necessary. "We are not مستوجب, meaning we are not worthy of attracting your mercy upon ourselves. No!

Seeking Forgiveness from God through His Vast Grace, not the Worthiness of the Servant

فانت اهل ان تجود علينا و على المذنبين بفضل سعتك.

You are worthy to bestow your generosity upon us and other sinners through the vastness of your grace.

فامنُنْ علَينا بما انت أهلُه.

Given our understanding, we implore you for your abundant grace. Shower us with your blessings and mercy, for you embody such generosity.

نه بما نحنُ اهلُه.

Acknowledging our inherent limitations and seeking forgiveness based on our merits would be an act of self-deception. Our past actions hold no merit, resembling a blank examination paper. To avoid an inevitable failing grade, we humbly turn to you, the ultimate source of grace. We understand that we cannot overcome this trial on our own. In your immeasurable benevolence, we implore you to guide and support us on this journey, rewriting our narrative with your divine intervention.

فامنُنْ علينا بما انتَ أهلُه.

Recognizing your expertise in diverse fields like writing, complex sciences, and various industries, we humbly reach out. Your proven success embodies exceptional skill and wisdom. Faced with our limitations, we implore you to guide us and complete this task on our behalf. We trust your judgment and ability to contribute in a way that reflects your remarkable knowledge and generosity.

The Truth of the Need of the Servants for God

و جُدْ علينا فإنّا مُحتاجُون إلىٰ نَيلِک.

Be generous to us, for we need Your surplus favor!"

Our plea does not stem from complacency or self-sufficiency. We do not approach you with demands, expecting fulfillment regardless of circumstance. A valid state of need drives us, compelling action like a hungry wolf driven by primal instincts. As Baba Taher aptly expresses,

که گرگ از هَیْ هَیْ چوپان نترسد.[194]

The wolf is undeterred by the shepherd's shouts." Even faced with threats or rejection, the wolf's desperation supersedes fear. Driven by its vital need, it would stand its ground, refusing to abandon its pursuit of survival. Similarly, our need knows no bounds. It compels us to persevere, undeterred by obstacles or pronouncements of scarcity. To turn away now, abandoning the sustenance we desperately seek, would be the antithesis of wisdom. Even a wolf faced with the shepherd's wrath understands this.

The more a person feels his need, the more his hope and desire increases

فإنّا مُحتاجون إلىٰ نَيلِک.

We need to attain You.

We are in need. We have felt that our very being needs Your forgiveness and Your reward.

Driven by an urgent need, we persevere undeterred. Mere dismissal holds no sway; we persist tonight, not tomorrow. An hour's delay is meaningless. Are you attempting to mislead us? Our inherent ability stems from you, not ourselves. Demands for action fall on deaf ears, for we readily admit our limitations. We may engage in imperfect efforts, but their inadequacy is apparent. This plea reflects the realization that such undertakings hold no value in your eyes.

The urgency of our need compels us to seek your response swiftly. We have diligently assessed our situation and recognized our limitations, creating heightened hope. This hope stems from the fundamental human truth: the greater our awareness of our needs, the greater our longing for fulfillment. However, hope dwindles where needs remain unacknowledged. Actions become mechanical rituals devoid of purpose. Whether prayers are answered or deeds are rewarded, these practices do not define our devotion. True faith transcends conditional agreements. We acknowledge the imperfections of our chosen path, but it serves as a compass guiding us through life's journey. While various doctrines may chart different routes, the fundamental human quest for meaning remains universal.

The light of the guidance of Truth guides the servants to the path of salvation

يا غفّارُ بنورِکَ اهتَدَينا و بفضلِکَ استَغنَينا و بنعمتِکَ أصبَحنا و أمسَينا.

O Forgiver, by Your light we are guided, and by Your grace we are enriched, and by Your blessings we have come to morning and evening.

O God of Forgiveness, we recognize that our newfound guidance, reliance on you, hope, and desires result from your illumination. Your light has shone in our hearts, leading us to this path and these thoughts. Without your guidance, we would be lost. We have found the way through your light, and by your grace, we have become independent of all others.

Divine grace leads to complete independence from all else and total dependence on the Truth

Were it not for your grace and awakening, we would wander like hungry dogs scavenging for scraps. We would spend our lives thirsty and hungry, without purpose or direction. Your grace has made us independent of all else, enriching us beyond measure. Yet, about You, we remain utterly dependent.

فإنّا مُحتاجونَ إلیٰ نَیلِک.

و برحمتِک اصبَحنا و أمسَینا

We live our lives immersed in your blessings from dawn to dusk. We recognize that these blessings come from you alone. We have become servants of your house, our ears pierced as a mark of our devotion. This shrine, where do you lead us now?

ذُنُوبُنَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْکَ.

Our sins are known to you, and we acknowledge them.

We do not claim to be sin-free; thus, we sincerely repent for our shortcomings.

نَسْتَغْفِرُکَ اللّهُمَّ مِنْهَا.

We humbly acknowledge our errors and seek your forgiveness, O Lord.

وَنَتُوبُ إِلَيْکَ.

We sincerely repent and return to You.

Despite the servant's transgressions, God's love remains a source of blessing

تَتَحَبَّبُ إِلَيْنَا بِالنِّعَمِ وَ نُعَارِضُکَ بِالذُّنُوبِ.

You continually shower us with Your blessings, one after another, each one a more excellent gift than the last. The greatest of these gifts is Your love, which You place in our hearts. Yet, instead of reciprocating Your love, we respond with sin!

We acknowledge our role as humble servants in the presence of a higher power. This understanding allows us to distinguish our actions from His, recognizing the limitations of our achievements compared to His infinite power. Filled with humility, we find ourselves unworthy of His abundant blessings. Through this recognition, we gain a deeper understanding of God's true nature: omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely compassionate.

أَیُّ جَهْلٍ لا یَسَعُهُ جُودُکَ!
أنتَ الجوادُ الَّذی لا یَضیقُ عَفوُکَ و لا یَنقُصُ فضلُکَ!

O ignorance that cannot comprehend Your generosity! You are the Most Generous, whose forgiveness is boundless and whose favor is endless!

Once we realize our limitations and God's infinite greatness, we find a measure of comfort. We come to understand that we are utterly dependent on His mercy. As long as we rely on our strength and self-confidence, we will never achieve true success. We must place our trust in God and burn away our ego with the fire of His love.

Goodness, grace, and everlasting generosity from You, evil, sin, and suspicion from us

وَ خیرُکَ إلینا نازلٌ وشرُّنا إلیک صاعدٌ ولم یَزَل و لا یَزال ملکٌ کریمٌ، یأتیک عنّا بعملٍ قبیحٍ فلا یَمنَعُک ذلک مِن أن تَحوطَنا بنعمِک، و تَتَفَضّلُ علینا بآلائِک فسُبحانک ما أحلَمَک وأعظَمَک وأکرَمَک!

You shower us with constant good, grace, and generosity while we offer only evil, sin, and suspicion. Despite our flaws, You never cease to bestow Your blessings and favors upon us. How patient, great, and generous You are! O Lord, You shower us with great and small blessings. You give us life, knowledge, power, mercy, and security. All of these are gifts from You.

We send You only fire, evil, and sin. We disobey You, have bad thoughts, complain, and are suspicious. This suspicion is about You. We do not dare say, "O God, we have a suspicion of You!"

While we constantly face challenges and negativity, Your generosity, Master, remains steady. You have always been, and will always be, a benevolent and gracious leader.

مَلِکٌ کریمٌ.

Your blessings are ever-flowing despite witnessing our shortcomings. Your kindness and generosity remain constant, even in the face of our wrongdoings. You do not withhold your goodness because of our sins, nor do you inflict swift punishment or seek revenge.

یأتیک عنّا بعملٍ قبیحٍ فلا یَمنعُک ذلک مِن أن تَحوطَنا بنعمِک.

Despite our frequent shortcomings and mistakes, your abundant blessings continue to grace us. We remain surrounded by your generosity.

و تَتَفَضّلَ علینا بآلائک.

Our sins do not stop You from showering us with Your blessings.

فسبحانَک.

You are a perfect God. You are pure, clean, and free from all impurities. Your heart is pure and untainted by anger or anxiety. You do not punish us quickly or hastily. You are truly superb and generous.

ما أحلَمَک.

How patient You are!

و أكرَمَک.

How great You are! How generous You are!

مُبدِءاً و مُعیداً.

The Originator and the Resurrector.

You are the beginning and the end. You began with blessings, and You continue to bestow blessings. Your blessings preceded our very existence. Unformed and unable to request them, we were met with your generosity. Now, having brought us into being, you continue to guide our path. You are the source and the sustainer, the alpha and omega. From nothingness to existence, both the desired and undesired, you are the Originator (مُبدِءاً -Mubdi') and the Perfector (مُعیداً -Mu'id').

تقدّست أسمائک.

May Your names be hallowed; Blessed be Your names.

و جلّ ثنائک.

Great is Your praise; Great is Your Attributes.

و کرُم صنائعک و فعالک.

And Your words and deeds are noble.

أنت إلهی أوسع فضلاً و أعظم حلماً من أن تقایسنی بفعلی و خطیئتی فالعفو العفو العفو، سیّدی سیّدی سیّدی.

The gist of what we want to say to You is this: O God, Your grace is vaster, and Your forbearance is more significant than to hold me accountable for my deeds and my sins. Do not hold me responsible for my sins; I confess to Your forgiveness. I say: O God, forgive me! Forgive me! Forgive me, O My Master, O My Master, O My Master.

فالعفو العفو العفو، سیّدی سیّدی سیّدی.

Embracing forgiveness serves as the ultimate key. When genuine acceptance of forgiveness occurs, transgressions from the past are dissolved, doubts vanish, and cherished hopes materialize.

Harboring doubts about the divine creates a barrier to advancement, parallel to a veil obscuring the path forward. Only with a heart cleared of such discord can actual progress be achieved. Progress remains elusive while doubt persists. The persistent presence of doubt necessitates dedicated efforts to dispel it, akin to purification.

بمحمّد و آله الطّاهرین و صلّ علیٰ محمّد و آله أجمعین.

By Muhammad and his pure family, and may God bless Muhammad and his family.

Session Ten: The quality of the constant remembrance of God and the importance of perseverance in action

أعوذُ بالله من الشّيطان الرّجيم
بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم
و صلّى اللهُ على خير خلقه محمّدٍ و آله الطيّبين الطّاهرين
و لعنةُ الله على أعدائهم اجمعين.

اللهمّ اشغلنا بذكرك و أعذنا من سخطك و أجرنا من عذابك و ارزقنا من مواهبك و أنعم علينا من فضلك.

O God, keep us occupied with Your remembrance and grant us refuge from Your anger. Save us from Your punishment, provide us with Your gifts and blessings, and bestow upon us Your grace.

The meaning of remembering God

اللّهمّ اشغلنا بذكرك![195]

The term "*dhikr*" translates to "remembrance of God" and originates from the root word "*dhakara*," meaning "to remember." *Dhikr* goes beyond mere verbal recitation; it signifies internalizing the meaning behind spoken words. We use *dhikr* to denote something actively present in our memory and mind. Similarly, specific phrases recited during *dhikr* serve as reminders and expressions of what the heart remembers, hence their designation as *dhikr*. In essence, *dhikr* is a practice of cultivating continuous awareness of God. It encompasses various methods, including recitation, prayer, meditation, and mindful living, that integrate the divine into our daily experience.

In the end, a person's sole and true benefit lies in the remembrance of God. Verbal expressions of *dhikr* (remembrance) hold value because they ultimately lead one towards this remembrance. Any form of dhikr that fosters the remembrance of God is valuable, while any that does not cultivate this awareness is of no value. Consequently, uttering a brief *dhikr* with mindful attention to God surpasses a lengthy *dhikr* performed without such focus.

The Importance of Consistency in Action

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) was a child who was very interested in *dhikr*, worship, and other spiritual practices. One day, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him) in Masjid al-haram saw his young son sitting on the hot ground, engrossed in worship. The Imam said to him:

يا بنيّ! إذا رضي اللهُ تعالى من العبد، رضي منه بالقليل.[196]

Oh, my son! O child! Oh, my little boy! If Allah the Exalted is pleased with a servant, He is pleased with him even if he does little.

This is why we have the following saying in the narrations:

قليلٌ يدومُ خيرٌ من كثيرٍ لا يدوم.[197]

A little that is consistent is better than a lot that is not.

Consistency demonstrates life in small amounts [in one's faith]. It's more valuable than sporadic bursts of significant effort. For instance, praying a thousand rak'ahs one night and neglecting prayer entirely the next proves less effective than maintaining a steady, habitual practice.

The Proverb "The Worship of the Frog"

Certain individuals begin their evenings with devotional recitations and prayers. However, fatigue overcomes them, leading to sleep that extends through the night. Consequently, they miss not only the night prayer but also the morning prayer (Fajr) and Bayn al-Ṭulūʻayn, the period between dawn and sunrise. In some instances, their slumber persists even beyond sunrise. An Arabic proverb aptly describes these individuals:

' هذا يعبُدُ عبادةَ العَگروگ '

This one worships like a frog.

During the nocturnal hours, frogs initiate vocalizations within gardens and marshlands. These vocalizations persist throughout the night, subsiding only as dawn approaches. With the arrival of sunrise, frog choruses cease entirely, and their calls become undetectable. Notably, these amphibians remain silent between dusk and dawn, and their activity does not resume until the following night.

The people described in the proverb are like frogs in that they only worship at certain times. They do not worship throughout the night, during the two dawns, or during the morning call to prayer.

While the quietude of the late-night offers a peaceful space for some, believers often take a different approach. At nightfall, when most are awake and the atmosphere feels heavy, the believer finds no strength for worship. This is reflected in the saying: "Sleep at the beginning of the night, for when all souls slumber at its end, and worship late when the world is silent and true space for devotion opens." This explains the practice of believers retiring early and rising before dawn to dedicate themselves to their daily tasks and engage in remembrance of God through prayer. However, moderation is key; prayers should not become a source of fatigue or disinterest for the soul.[198]

Many authentic narrations emphasize the importance of gentleness in acts of worship. [199] This translates to a practice of moderation. We should engage in

worship to the degree that it inspires us, driven by love and enthusiasm. If fatigue sets in, it's perfectly acceptable to pause. For instance, if dizziness disrupts your night prayers after two rak'ahs, rest until it subsides and then resume.

Supererogatory prayers (*nafilah*) are not mandatory. They are offered at one's discretion and capacity. Some individuals might feel compelled to pray a hundred rak'ahs on a particular night, while on others, even two might feel overwhelming. There's no compulsion - the essence of these prayers lies in following one's inclination.

A Beautiful Narrative Metaphor for Not Being Gentle with the nafs

A person who rushes in their worship is like a rider who neither travels the path nor spares the horse's back![200]

A hadith emphasizes the importance of balance in spiritual development. It warns against approaching religious practices with excessive haste or rigor, which can lead to exhaustion and potential abandonment. Like how relentlessly pushing a horse can lead to fatigue, overly strenuous spiritual practices can be unsustainable. Conversely, an excessively passive approach can hinder progress. The key is to find a balanced and measured approach that fosters steady and long-term growth.

Human *nafs* always need to be occupied with something. Just as the human body is alive and constantly working, never stopping for a moment, so is the *nafs* or the "self." The human body operates as a finely tuned machine, continuously engaged in various functions regardless of our conscious choices. Sleep or wakefulness, silence or speech, stillness or movement, and seemingly passive activities like eating or praying involve a symphony of internal processes. The heart maintains its rhythmic beat, the kidneys perform their vital filtration, blood tirelessly circulates, and nutrients nourish even the cells of our senses. Each cell within the body faithfully executes its designated role, contributing to this ceaseless internal movement. This intricate choreography is essential for sustaining life itself.

Like the body, the *nafs* (self) is always occupied with something. As long as the self is alive, it constantly encounters things and forms images of them in the mind. This happens whether the person is asleep or awake, still or moving, young or old. The *nafs* is always searching for something. It is always seeking out new images and memories to fill the mind. The human mind can't be completely free of thoughts and memories.

The self can find peace and tranquility only by transcending the world of form. The self is no longer occupied with images and memories in the world beyond form. It is free to focus on the simple, unadorned reality of the divine.

The Importance of Remembering God

Humans possess an innate need for mental engagement. The question arises: What direction should our thoughts take for maximum benefit and fulfillment? This discourse presents a compelling argument for contemplating the eternal, particularly the act of remembering God.

Focusing on the fleeting aspects of life, such as material possessions, personal desires, or transient relationships, ultimately provides limited satisfaction. Instead, directing our thoughts towards the enduring and transcendent, such as the concept of God or other aspects of spirituality, offers a more lasting sense of meaning and purpose.

Focusing on enduring truths is more valuable than dwelling on fleeting experiences. Contemplating the eternal can guide us towards a transcendent understanding while dwelling on the transient keeps our attention focused on the immediate and impermanent.

اللهمّ اشغلنا بذكرك .

O God, keep us occupied with the remembrance of You.

A Life Dedicated to Spirituality: A Reminiscence of the Late Mr. Qāḍī

A friend in Najaf shared a remarkable account of his experience studying under the renowned scholar, the late Mr. Qāḍī. He recounted attending his classes diligently for thirteen years, spending several hours daily in his presence. Throughout this extended period, the friend emphasized never hearing Mr. Qāḍī utter a word concerning worldly matters.

During a visit, another friend, driven by curiosity, asked about the nature of mystical experiences mentioned by Mr. Qāḍī. These experiences included concepts like "maqām wuṣūl," " maqām liqā,'" and "fanā fi Allah."[201] The friend inquired whether these were truly attainable states or mere figments of imagination. Mr. Qāḍī's response was both firm and direct. He emphasized his

extensive experience on the spiritual path, spanning four decades. With this weight of experience, he unequivocally dismissed these experiences as mere imagination.

Within Islamic wisdom, absorbing oneself with the remembrance of God finds expression in the supplication, "O God, keep us occupied with Your remembrance." This denotes a continuous striving to cultivate mindful awareness directed toward the Divine. Ideally, such a state transcends all extraneous thoughts, leaving the mind in a state of pristine clarity, focused exclusively on the experience of the Divine.

و أعذنا من سخطک .

And shelter us from Your wrath in Your embrace!

Merciful God, turn away Your wrath from us. Let anger reside with others but not with You, for Your displeasure is a mighty storm that shatters the soul.

و أجرنا من عذابک .

O God, Protect Us from Your Punishment in Your Embrace

O God, we yearn for your embrace even in the face of your just correction. Shield us from the full force of your rebuke, for we are but human, ill-equipped to endure the unmitigated intensity of your wrath. Our hearts are accustomed to your blessings, your favor, your mercy, and the captivating beauty of your presence. Should it be your will to discipline us, we acknowledge your sovereign right. However, we implore you not to let your chastisement estrange us from you. Instead, guide us towards correction in a way that fosters a deeper connection with you, for your distance truly terrifies us. How you choose to draw us closer, be it through continued mercy, overflowing compassion, the revelation of your magnificent beauty, or the awe-inspiring power of your majesty, we leave entirely in your hands.

و ارزقنا من مواهبک .

O God, grant us from Your gifts!

The boundless bounties that ever flow from the inexhaustible treasury of Your generosity, showering beings and the universe, grant us a portion of these gifts as our sustenance! We possess a great yearning distinct from that of the common folk. Their desires are modest; a morsel of bread or a stew suffices, a simple life brings contentment, and a position of authority brings happiness.

While worldly pursuits offer fulfillment to some, those on the spiritual path are driven by an insatiable hunger for something more valuable. This yearning

transcends material comforts and positions of power, seeking a connection to something far grander.

As alluded to by Imam Sajjad (عليه السلام), this pursuit may seem insatiable, a boundless hunger that cannot be satiated by earthly means. This spiritual hunger is not self-inflicted but cultivated by established spiritual teachings and traditions. Supplications like those offered by Abu Hamza Thumali provide guidance and practices that help individuals cultivate this divine yearning and progress on their spiritual journeys. Just as a mother nourishes her child and guides them to eat, the Imam instructs us to cultivate a vast appetite and declare:

إنّ لنا فيكَ أملاً طويلاً.[202]

Indeed, we hold a long hope in You.

What response can we offer when Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) utters these words?

و ارزُقنا من مَواهبِكَ .

O God, Provide for Us from Your Bounty

You are the Provider God:

ان الله هو الرزاق ذو القوه المتين.[203]

Indeed, Allah is the Provider, the Possessor of strength, the Mighty.

Most Gracious God, as You are the Provider, sustain all creation. We believe that Your provision is meant to nourish and fulfill our needs. We humbly ask that You grant us sustenance that brings true satisfaction. If it displeases You for some to feel unsatisfied after a meal, especially during the sacred Iftar of Ramadan, then we understand and accept Your will. However, if it aligns with Your divine plan, we pray to be filled with contentment and gratitude after receiving Your blessings. Our faith in You is continual and we have a long hope in You.

إنّ لنا فيكَ أملاً طويلاً .
و ارزُقنا من مَواهبِكَ و أنعِم علَينا من فضلِكَ .

O God, bestow Your grace upon us from Your abundance.

O God, grant us such an overflowing experience of Your presence that all earthly distinctions dissolve. May we lose awareness of hand and foot, head and hand, all external phenomena fading away. In that state of rapture, what will remain? Only the ardent yearning for remembrance of You.

و ارزُقنا حجّ بيتِكَ و زيارةَ قبرِ نبيِّكَ صلَواتُكَ و رَحمَتُكَ و مَغفرَتُكَ و رِضوانُكَ عليهِ و علىٰ أهلِ بيتِه، إنّكَ قريبٌ مُجيبٌ.

O God, grant us the blessed opportunity to undertake the pilgrimage to Your House and perform Hajj. May we be granted the ability to visit the Prophet's tomb, upon him be peace and blessings. You are ever-present, and You answer the prayers of the faithful. Hear our supplication and allow us to complete the Hajj pilgrimage.

In Islam, performing the Hajj is considered a highly meritorious act of worship. Muslims are encouraged to pray for the opportunity to undertake this pilgrimage, a transformative spiritual experience for those who embark on it. [204]

My Sister's Hajj Tamattu Journey

One of my deeply devout sisters adheres to a very specific lifestyle. We invited her to join us when we planned a trip to Mecca a few years ago. However, she firmly declined, stating, "This modern Hajj is not true pilgrimage; it's become commercialized tourism! I yearn to experience Hajj in a way that aligns with God's will!" I readily agreed, "Let's undertake the pilgrimage as you envision!" She countered, "My specific needs make it difficult. It seems fashionable nowadays for everyone to travel to Mecca with their spouses!" Ultimately, she remained steadfast in her refusal. We embarked on gentle, patient persuasion, akin to fishermen coaxing a catch. As the Arabic proverb states, "There is magic in persuasion" (إنّ منَ البيانِ لَسحراً).[205]

Our efforts bore fruit and she softened her stance. After preparations, we arranged for a passport photo. She objected, "A photo? I refuse pictures! Mecca has nothing to do with photographs!" We reassured her, "The picture doesn't need to be conventional. You can wear your veil, and a female photographer can take it. It's solely for passport purposes, not a personal image. There's nothing wrong with that."

Fortunately, we secured the photo and embarked on the journey together. She fervently performed the Tawaf, Sa'i, and other rituals upon arrival. Overwhelmed with emotion, she recited the Labbaik chants aloud and wept. The Grand Mosque's sanctity captivated her so noticeably that she wished to remain there indefinitely.

Upon returning home, she eagerly awaited the next Hajj season. She confessed, "What has come over me? I used to dismiss Hajj as mere tourism and business! But it's nothing like that; It's an experience of unparalleled depth, unlike anything else I've encountered.!" May God grant her the opportunity to return for another Hajj.

Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (peace be upon him) performed Hajj on foot twenty-five times.[206] Imam Zayn al-Abidin (peace be upon him) is said to have performed Hajj on his camel the same number of times or slightly less.[207] It is important to note that Hajj is distinct from Umrah. The reward for performing Hajj is much greater than that of Umrah. The closest to Hajj in terms of reward is the Umrah performed in the month of Rajab.

God, bestow upon us the honor of visiting the tomb of Your Prophet, upon whom be Your blessings, mercy, forgiveness, and pleasure. He and his Ahl al-Bayt pioneered this spiritual path, illuminated its intricacies, and instilled its divine meanings within humanity. They tirelessly contended with humankind's inherent materialism and sensuality, engrossed in worldly possessions and captivated by fleeting hopes and desires. Yet, the Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt transformed these hearts, transporting them to the realm of the eternal, cultivating love and yearning for everlasting life within them. Through their blessings, they opened the pathway for humanity to reach You, O God.[208]

The blessings bestowed upon past prophets and their nations stemmed from the mercy of our Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). This emphasizes their esteemed position and the importance of respecting them across all religions before and including Islam. May God's mercy, forgiveness, and love for them continue to grow! May they ever progress in embodying the divine qualities of beauty and goodness. May their capacity for resilience and responsibility in challenging circumstances (sa'ah) and their spiritual standing (degree) be ever-elevated in God's infinite holiness.

و ارزقنا عملاً بطاعتک؛ و توفنا علی ملتک و سنة نبیک صلی الله علیه و آله.

O God, guide us and empower us to follow Your path faithfully. Lead us to actions that bring us closer to Your will and earn Your favor. Grant us the strength to avoid negligence, disobedience, and seeking the approval of others above Yours. May we find our end firmly rooted in Your faith.

People, tribes, clans, and nations have their traditions. The traditions and innovations of ignorance have taken hold of people's minds and turned them into fossilized and petrified people. Therefore, we pray to God, "Die us on Your tradition and religion." God also has a religion, and His religion is "There is no god but Allah."[209]

لا إله إلاّ الله

There is nothing else in the world besides God. God's religion is the religion of the Lord, the religion of the Quran, and its commandments, which all revolve around the axis of monotheism.

We pray to God to save us from all the traditions and customs of ignorance! Without exception, any religion other than Your religion is from the traditions of ignorance and from the religions of ignorance.

The Technical Meaning of Sunnah

و سُنَّةِ نبيِّک صلَّی اللهُ علَیهِ و آلِه .

Die Us on the Sunnah of Your Prophet.

In Islam, the Sunnah refers to the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, which Muslims consider a model for living. These practices are personal actions and principles established for the entire Muslim community.

اللّهمّ اغفِر لی و لِوالِدَیّ و ارحَمهُما کما ربّیانی صغیراً! اجزِهما بالإحسانِ إحساناً و بالسّیئاتِ غُفراناً.

O God, forgive me and my parents and have mercy on them, as they raised me when I was young. Reward them with good for their good deeds and forgiveness for their wrongdoings.

In Islam, praying for one's parents is considered a highly commendable act.[210] Parents are believed to hold a special place in their children's lives and appreciate their prayers. A story about Imam Sajjad illustrates this emphasis. It is said that his first prayer included paying respect to a revered figure (Prophet Muhammad) and his descendants, followed by prayers for his parents. This highlights the importance of honoring both spiritual guides and one's parents. The concept behind this practice is that parents are the foundation of one's existence. Just as a healthy root system is essential for a flourishing plant, showing respect and praying for the Prophet, his descendants, and one's parents is crucial for spiritual growth.

The Method of the 'Prayer for Parents'

The "Prayer for Parents" is a highly regarded supplication that Muslims are encouraged to recite regularly. If time permits, performing two rak'ahs of this prayer daily is recommended. During the first rak'ah, after reciting the Fatihah, repeat the following verse ten times:

ربنا اغفر لي ولوالدي وللمؤمنين يوم يقوم الحساب.[211]

Our Lord, forgive me, my parents, and the believers on the Day when the reckoning comes.

In the second rak'ah, after the Fatiha, recite ten times:

ربي اغفر لي ولوالدي ولمن دخل بيتي مؤمنا وللمؤمنين والمؤمنات.[212]

My Lord, forgive me, my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer, and the believing men and women.

After the prayer is finished, recite ten times:

ربي ارحمهما كما ربياني صغيرا.[213]

My Lord, have mercy on them as they raised me when I was small.

This prayer is considered highly efficacious, bringing continual blessings to parents.[214]

A story about how the prayers of parents reach them

During a visit from my father's maternal uncle, Mr. Aqa Mirza Muhammad Tihrani, to Tehran from Samarra, our home was filled with guests from various backgrounds. Among those assisting were my uncles, Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Taqi, Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Reza, and Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Kazem, who tirelessly attended to the guests from morning to evening.

One day, my father's cousin, Mirza Najm al-Din, approached my uncle, Hajj Sayyid Muhammad Reza, and recounted a dream. "I dreamt of your mother," he said. "She conveyed a message: Muhammad Reza has not sent us food for several nights!"

Disturbed by the dream, my uncle, Sayyid Muhammad Reza, relayed the message to his wife upon returning home the following day. He pondered its meaning. 'What have we done wrong?' he thought, 'to neglect sending food to our parents for nights?'

A sudden realization struck him. My uncle, Aqa Seyyid Muhammad Reza, personally recounted this dream to me. He explained that for twenty-five to thirty years, he had consistently offered two rak'ahs of the 'prayer of parents' each night between Maghrib and Isha prayers. However, during his recent stay assisting the guests, he unintentionally missed these prayers for a few nights. This detail remained unknown to everyone else.

The dream of his mother stating, "Muhammad Reza has not sent us food for several nights," could be interpreted as a symbolic representation of his unintentional neglect in performing the dedicated prayers for his parents.

Building strong relationships with your parents is crucial for personal growth and fulfillment. Expressing gratitude and supporting your parents while they are with you is essential. Cherish and appreciate their presence, as opportunities to reconnect after their passing are gone forever. Cultivating a positive and respectful relationship with your parents can significantly benefit navigating life's challenges. This requires effort and commitment, but the positive impact can be undisputable. Genuine care and respect are the keys to building a strong bond with your parents. This connection can be a source of emotional support and contribute to achieving your goals. It is very effective in opening the locks of heaven. The key is their love![215]

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، الْأَحْيَاءِ مِنْهُمْ وَ الْأَمْوَاتِ، وَ تَابِعْ بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ.

O God! Forgive and have mercy on all believing men and women.

الْأَحْيَاءِ مِنْهُمْ.

Muslims worldwide are bound by their faith and share a common humanity. May God forgive their transgressions, purify their hearts, and grant them peace. May He also extend His forgiveness to those who have passed away.

وَ تَابِعْ بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ.

Connect us to them with a string of good deeds; do not separate us!

The word 'تابع' means 'to follow. 'Following' can imply different nuances. 'Aligning' with someone's thoughts suggests active engagement and understanding, while 'continuing' a conversation requires uninterrupted engagement. This highlights the importance of consistency in building connections.

Throughout the world, good deeds can forge lasting bonds between individuals, regardless of location or background. This connection strengthens when we actively engage in these good deeds – supporting others, upholding values, and working towards shared goals. This creates a constant connection thread, fostering a global community built on shared values and mutual respect.

Let us strive to maintain this connection through consistent and positive actions, ensuring that the bonds of humanity remain solid and ever-growing.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيِّنَا وَ مَيِّتِنَا، وَ شَاهِدِنَا وَ غَائِبِنَا، ذَكَرِنَا وَ أُنْثَانَا، صَغِيرِنَا وَ كَبِيرِنَا، حُرِّنَا وَ مَمْلُوكِنَا !

O Allah, forgive us! Extend Your forgiveness to our living and our dead, those who are present and those who are absent, those who are male and those who are female, those who are young and those who are old, those who are free and those who are enslaved. Forgive all of them!

حرّنا، مملوكنا، أنثانا، غائبنا، شاهدنا.

A believer is connected to humanity, so mankind must pray for them.

Humanity should intercede for one another through prayer in a spirit of compassion. Prayer is not solitary; it offers personal solace and radiates kindness and mercy outward. Imagine one person praying in the east, sending positive energy towards another in the west, united by this act of connection.

The Story of the Late Allamah and His Friend's Prayer for Him

During my time in Najaf, I went to Karbala during Ramadan. Since classes were suspended during Ramadan, I stayed in Karbala. A very pious friend went to Baghdad and Kadhimiya for a few days and then returned. One day, I felt a strange sense of constriction and anxiety. I couldn't understand the reason for it. I performed ablution to pray in the shrine of the Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him). I couldn't bring myself to the shrine, so I sat in a corner of the courtyard for about an hour before noon. Suddenly, I felt a sense of joy, delight, and ecstasy. It was so strange! It was a state of expansion that was incomparable to the previous constriction and anxiety. The next day, my friend returned and said, "Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, what happened yesterday? Why were you so upset?" He said, "I saw that you were very anxious and upset. I went to the shrine of Musa ibn Ja'far (peace be upon him) and prayed two rak'ahs for you an hour before noon. The moment he prayed for me there, I experienced a sudden and unexplained shift in mood from anxiety to joy.

All the believers in the world are connected to humanity, and we should always pray for each other. It's common to experience unexplained emotions like a sudden restriction or unease, often without apparent cause. Interestingly, such instances may sometimes seem to be shared across distances, suggesting a connection beyond the physical.[216]

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) went to the house of Fatima Zahra (peace be upon her) and said: O Fatima, attend to the following matters before retiring for the night. Haḍrat Fatima asked, "Father, what should I do?" The Prophet said: Every night before you go to sleep, recite the entire Quran once, perform one Hajj and one Umrah, send blessings to all believing men and women, and make all the prophets and angels your intercessors. Fatima said: Father, how can I recite the Quran every night before sleep? Perform one Hajj and one Umrah! How is that possible? Hajj is only performed at a specific time of year, and each person can only perform Hajj once a year. How can I perform Hajj every night?! And how can I send blessings to all the believing men and women in the world?! And make all the prophets and angels my intercessors?! The prophet said: Dear Fatima, Whoever recites Surah Al-Ikhlas (Qul Huwa Allahu Ahad)[217] three times receives a reward equivalent to reciting the entire Quran. Therefore, recite it three times. If someone says: 'Subhan Allah, wa al-hamdulillah, wa la ilaha illallah, wa Allah Akbar,'

سُبحانَ اللهِ و الحَمدُ لِلّهِ و لا إلَهَ إلا اللهُ و اللهُ أكبَرُ .

They will receive the reward from Hajj and Umrah. And if someone says:

اللّهمّ اغفر لِلمُؤمنينَ و المُؤمناتِ .

'O Allah, forgive the believing men and women.'

This sentiment resonates with all believers because such prayers are seen as particularly likely to be accepted by God.

Then say:

اللّهمّ صلِّ علىٰ محمّدٍ و آلِ محمّدٍ و علَى الأنبياءِ و المُرسلينَ و الملائكةِ المُقرّبينَ .

O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad and upon the prophets, messengers, and angels who are nearby.

This supplication (or prayer) is believed to bring about the intercession of the Prophet, his family, the angels (both near and far), and all the prophets and messengers on behalf of the one who recites it.[218]

Then recite one Al-Tasbīhāt al-Arba'a,

اللّهمّ اغفر لِلمُؤمنينَ و المُؤمناتِ، اللّهمّ صلِّ علىٰ محمّدٍ و آلِ محمّدٍ و علَى الملائكةِ المُقرّبينَ و الأنبياءِ و المُرسلينَ .

The four prayers (Al-Tasbīhāt al-Arba'a) are: O Allah, forgive the believing men and women; send blessings upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad; send blessings upon the close angels, the prophets, and messengers.

كَذَبَ العادِلُونَ بِاللهِ وَ ضَلُّوا ضَلالاً بَعِيداً.

Those who have strayed from God's path have propagated falsehoods, succumbed to misconceptions, and inflicted demonstrable harm.

'Idl, or creating an equal, refers to establishing something with a counterpart or match. It signifies a corresponding element that forms a complete pair—for instance, a scale functions based on the presence of two balancing sides. Similarly, a human possesses two shoes, sleeves, and legs, each constituting a pair for its counterpart.

A Playful Exchange Between the Prophet and His Companions

On one occasion, while conversing with his companions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) playfully extended one foot from beneath his garment. He then posed a lighthearted question to the attendees, asking them to identify the appearance of his foot. This seemingly simple query prompted various guesses from the companions, none of which accurately described the foot's appearance. The Prophet then revealed his other foot, demonstrating their identical nature as '*idl* or equal.

A Playful Exchange Between the Prophet and the Commander of the Faithful

On one occasion, the Prophet and Amir Al-Mu'minin (the Commander of the Faithful) enjoyed consuming dates together. As the Prophet finished each date, he playfully placed the pit before the Commander of the Faithful. Humorously, a mound of pits soon accumulated before the Commander. The Prophet remarked, "Ali, look how much you've eaten!" The Commander, ever quick-witted, responded, "Messenger of Allah, surely the one who ate with the pits consumed more!"[219]

كَذَبَ العادِلُونَ.

However, the concept of God possessing an equal or partner is fundamentally incompatible with the belief in a singular, unified divine entity. Attributing partners to God, often called '*shirk*,' implies limitations or deficiencies in the divine, which contradicts the notion of an absolute and complete being. Analogies like needing two shoes, limbs, or wings to function illustrate the inadequacy of such comparisons when applied to the divine realm.

Individuals who focus on worldly pursuits while neglecting God inadvertently elevate those pursuits to a position equal to God. This effectively creates a partner for God, like saying, "Oh God, you exist, and so does this! You cannot act alone!"

Such behavior resembles a bird with one wing for divine power and greatness and another for material concerns like family, business, power, knowledge, etc. By attributing effectiveness to these worldly things at the expense of God, they essentially create a rival to the divine.

The polytheists lose their existence in the world

Imam says:

كَذَبَ العادِلونَ .

The unjust have lied; all of those who set up equals or partners for God are lying! God has no equal.

و ضَلّوا ضَلالاً بَعيداً .

They have gone far astray, lost in a faraway land, and will never be found again!

While some things might be misplaced and recovered with varying degrees of effort, there are things once lost that are eternally beyond retrieval. Such is the fate of those seeking equals or partners alongside God; their essence is forfeited. Banished from the realm of life, the divine sanctuary of peace, the station of nearness to God, and the life-giving breezes of that realm, they are eternally deprived of its fragrant aura and refreshing touch. They are utterly lost.[220]

و خَسِروا خُسراناً مُبيناً .

And they will surely lose, a manifest loss.

اللهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلىٰ محمَّدٍ و آلِ محمَّدٍ، و اختِم لِی بِخَیرٍ و اکفِنی ما أهَمَّنی مِن أمرِ دُنیایَ و آخرَتی.

God bless Muhammad and his family, conclude my affairs with goodness, and suffice me for what concerns me in my worldly life and afterlife.

Imam Ali offered a unique perspective during a gathering, discussing auspicious days, months, and hours. While others debated religious holidays and specific times, he declared, "The most significant day is the one upon which you depart this world, bearing the acceptance of your actions."

The most auspicious moment, be it during Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhu al-Qadah, or any other time, is when a person departs this world with a sense of divine approval.[221] Without this acceptance, what true significance holds even the holiest month or the blessed day of Friday?

May my conclusion be characterized by goodness(*'Āfiat*).

و اختِم لِی بِخَیر.

Make my end good.

I pray that my efforts in this earthly life hold lasting value, imbued with the essence of Your love. May this love uplift our burdened and weary souls toward the realm of divine nearness.

و اکفِنی ما اَهَمَّنی مِن امرِ دُنیایَ و اخِرَتی.

And suffice me in what concerns me of my worldly and religious affairs.

In my humility, Divine Source, I acknowledge my incapacity to navigate the complexities of life solely through my actions, let alone seek solutions for spiritual matters. Indeed, my grasp of worldly affairs remains limited. This realization underlines the shared essence of earthly and spiritual concerns, both ultimately residing within Your domain, devoid of distinction. Just as burdens heavy and light hold no special significance before Your infinite power and knowledge, so too do worldly and spiritual matters dissolve into a single concept under Your purview. All possibilities rest easily within Your hands, unconstrained by external forces. Therefore, we turn to You not with segmented petitions for earthly solutions or spiritual interventions but with the understanding that everything stems from Your divine will. Grant us the strength and guidance to navigate this life under Your watchful gaze; all of it is Yours, so You suffice us!

The most merciless of all is the human nafs(the self or ego)

و لا تُسَلِّط عَلَیَّ مَن لا یَرحَمُنی.

Do not make dominant over me someone who does not have mercy on me.

While nefarious forces like the domineering self, the cunning trickster, and the oppressive ruler can inflict considerable harm, ultimately, our unchecked ego poses the greatest threat. Misfortunes, hardships, lack of fulfillment, spiritual blindness, and internal struggles can stem from this uncontrolled ego.

O Divine Source, I pray you do not grant dominance to this internal adversary. While it remains a presence, please grant me the strength and discernment to overcome its sway. May I harness it, not let it control me, and emerge victorious in the ongoing struggle for inner mastery.

و اجعَل عَلَیَّ مِنکَ واقِیَةً باقِیَةً.

O God, send me lasting protection from You. Send me a protector who will keep me in Your grace and shelter!

The value of protection is undeniable. In difficult situations, such as deep-sea exploration or space travel, specialized safeguards ensure safety and mitigate risks. Similarly, we implore divine intervention to shield our minds, thoughts, and innermost secrets from distractions and provide focus on the transcendent. This enduring protection, free from any momentary lapse or vulnerability, represents the true essence of a lasting safeguard.

و لا تَسلُبنی صالِحَ ما أنعَمتَ بِهِ عَلَیَّ، و ارزُقنی مِن فَضلِکَ رِزقًا واسِعًا حَلالًا طَیِّبًا.

Grant me the enduring grace to retain the virtues You have bestowed upon me, O Divine Providence. May your bounty continue to provide me with ample, ethical, and beneficial sustenance. Above all, I implore you never to deprive me of the greatest blessing: Among the blessings bestowed upon humanity, one transcends all others in its splendor and value. This radiant treasure is the state of inner harmony, encompassing mindfulness, clarity of conscience, focused awareness, emotional yearning, genuine joy, love, inherent inclination, and an enduring pull towards the divine. No earthly possession, regardless of its perceived worth, can ever match the significance of this gift. Source of All, may You never deprive me of this precious state. All other blessings follow suit with it intact, enriching my life profoundly. Yet, should it be lost, even the most coveted earthly treasures would turn hollow and meaningless.□

و لا تَسلُبنی صالِحَ ما أنعَمتَ بِهِ عَلَیَّ.

May Your bountiful grace bestow upon me an ample and Halal means of sustenance.

بِمحمَّدٍ و آلِهِ الطّاهِرینَ و صلِّ علی محمَّدٍ و آلِهِ اجمعینَ.

□ O Allah, bless Muhammad and his pure family and send blessings upon them.

Excerpts from Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī supplication, narrations, and Arabic poems

متىٰ غِبتَ حتّىٰ تَحتاجَ إلىٰ دليلٍ يدُلُّ عليكَ؟ 2

و العُذرُ عندَ كِرامِ النّاسِ مقبولٌ. 17

شكّر الله مساعيهم الجملية. 17

اللهمّ ألحِقنا بعبادِك الّذين هم بالبِدار إليك يُسارِعون و بابَك على الدّوام يَطرقون و النّهار يعبدون...! 18

إلٰهي لا تُؤدِّبني بعُقوبتِكَ. 19

و لا تَمكُر بي في حيلَتِكَ. 19

فَهَبني [يا إلٰهي و سيّدي و مولايَ و ربّي] صبَرتُ علىٰ عذابِكَ، فكيفَ أصبِرُ علىٰ فِراقِكَ؟! أصبِرُ عنِ النّظَرِ إلىٰ كَرامَتِكَ؟ 22

عذِّب بِما شئتَ غيرَ البُعد. 22

هل مِن مُستغفِرٍ؟ هل مِن داعٍ؟ 26

لا إله إلاّ الله و سبحان الله. 26

إلٰهي لا تُؤدِّبني بِعُقوبتِكَ. 28

و لا تَمكُر بي في حيلَتِكَ. 28

مِن أينَ لِيَ الخيرُ يا ربِّ، و لا يُوجدُ إلاّ مِن عندكَ. 31

و مِن أينَ لِيَ النّجاةُ، و لا تُستطاعُ إلاّ بكَ. 31

و لا يُمكِنُ الفِرارُ مِن حُكومَتِكَ! 32

لا الّذي أحسنَ استغنىٰ عن عونِكَ و رحمتِك. 32

و لا الّذي أساءَ و اجترأَ عليكَ و لم يُرضِكَ خرَجَ عن سُلطانِكَ. 32

يا ربِّ! يا ربِّ! يا ربِّ! يا ربِّ! يا ربِّ! 33

بِكَ عرَفتُكَ، و أنتَ دلَلتَني عليكَ و دعَوتَني إليك، و لَولا أنتَ لَم أدرِ ما أنتَ. 33

و لِكلِّ طاعةٍ و معصيةٍ لا حولَ و لا قوّةَ إلاّ باللهِ العليِّ العظيم 34

بِكَ عرَفتُكَ، و أنتَ دلَلتَني عليكَ، و دعَوتَني إليكَ، و لولا أنتَ لم أدرِ ما أنتَ. 35

البَعرةُ تَدُلُّ على البَعيرِ، و أثرُ الأقدامِ يدُلُّ على المَسيرِ؛ أ فَسماءٌ ذاتُ أبراجٍ و أرضٌ ذاتُ فِجاجٍ لا تَدُلّانِ على اللّطيفِ الخبيرِ؟ 37

و عليكُم بِدينِ العَجائزِ 38

بِكَ عرَفتُكَ. 42

فَسخِ العزائمِ و نَقضِ الهِمَمِ. 42

أنتَ شاهدٌ لي و مَشهودٌ. 43

و رأيتُك في كلِّ شيءٍ، 43

داخلٌ في الأشياءِ لا بالمُمازَجةِ و خارجٌ عنها لا بالمُزايلَةِ. 45

كيفَ يُستدَلُّ عليكَ بِما هوَ في وُجودِهِ مُفتقِرٌ إليكَ؟! أ يكونُ لِغيرِكَ مِنَ الظّهورِ ما ليسَ لكَ حتّىٰ يكونَ هوَ المُظهِرَ لكَ؟ 45

متىٰ غِبتَ حتّىٰ تَحتاجَ إلىٰ دليلٍ يدُلُّ عليكَ؟ 47

جُعِلَتْ لي الأرضُ مسجدًا و طهورًا. 48

و متىٰ بَعُدتَ حتّىٰ تكونَ الآثارُ هيَ الّتي توصِلُ إليكَ؟ 48

عَمِيَت عينٌ لا تَراكَ عليها رَقيبًا و خَسِرَت صفقَةُ عبدٍ لم تَجعل لَهُ مِن حُبِّكَ نَصيبًا. 48

خَسِرَت صفقَةُ عبدٍ. 49

اللهُمَّ عَرِّفنی نَفسَکَ فإنَّکَ إن لَم تُعَرِّفنی نَفسَکَ لَم أعرِف رَسولَکَ. 49
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وَ دَعَوتَنی إلَیکَ. 50
وَ لَو لا أنتَ لَم أدرِ ما أنتَ. 50
تَعَرَّفتَ إلَیَّ فی کلِّ شَیءٍ فلا أجهَلُکَ فی شَیءٍ. 50
وَ لَو لا أنتَ لَم أدرِ ما أنتَ. 51
الحَمدُ لِلّهِ الَّذی أدعُوهُ فیُجیبُنی، و إن کُنتُ بَطیئاً حینَ یَدعُونی؛ و الْحمدُ لِلّهِ الَّذی أسأَلُهُ فَیُعطینی، و إن کُنتُ بخیلاً حینَ یَس. 52
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و الحَمدُ لِلّهِ الَّذی أسأَلُهُ فَیُعطینی، و إن کُنتُ بَخیلاً حینَ یَستَقرِضُنی. 53
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العَبدُ و ما فی یَدِهِ کان لِمولاه. 55
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و الحَمدُ لِلّهِ الَّذی أُنادیهِ کُلَّما شِئتُ لِحاجَتی، و أخلُو بهِ حَیثُ شِئتُ لِسِرِّی بِغَیرِ شَفیعٍ فَیَقضی لی حاجَتی. 60
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الحَمدُ للّهِ الَّذی لا أدعُو غَیرَهُ، و لَو دَعَوتُ غَیرَهُ لَم یَستَجِب لی دعائی! 61
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[1] For more information on the meaning of the divine and creational aspects, refer to Ma'ād Shināsī, Vol. 5, 28th Majlis.

[2] To know more about the justifications raised about the quality of Imam's speech with the Exalted God and the answer, refer to Ḥayāt Jāwīd, pp. 61-47.

3 Munājāt Khwājah 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, Munājāt 213; P. 119, Munājāt 223, with some differences.

4 It is known as "Abū Ḥamza" in Farsi.

5 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. 'Abī Ṭālib (Arabic: علي بن الحسين بن علي بن أبي طالب) (b. 38/659 – d. 95/713) known as Imām al-Sajjād (امام السجاد, lit. the Consistently Prostrating) and Zayn al-'Abidīn (زين العابدين, lit. Adornment of the Worshippers) is the fourth Imam of Shi'a.

[6] Imām Shināsī, vol. 16, p. 46: The status of Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī: Among them is Abū Ḥamza (Thābit ibn Dīnār); he is one of the trustworthy predecessors of our righteous ones and is among their eminent ones. He learned from the three imams: Ṣādiq, Bāqir, and Zayn al-'Ābidīn (peace be upon them). He is one of those who turned to them entirely and was close to them. Imam Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) praised him, saying:

ابوحمزة فی زمانه مثل سلمان الفارسی فی زمانه*

Abu Hamza in his time is like Salman al-Farisi.

And it is reported from Imam Riḍā (peace be upon him) that:

ابوحمزة فی زمانه كلقمان فی زمانه؛**

Abu Hamza was the same as Luqman Hakim in his time.
He has a book on Quran interpretation.
* Rijāl al-Najāshī, p. 115; al-Murāja'āt, p. 611.
**Rijāl al-Kashshī, vol. 2, p. 458; al-Murāja'āt, p. 611.

7 The verses of Abu Hamzah's noble prayer in this volume are from Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid's book, vol. 2, pp. 582-587.

[8] Mawlānā Jalāl al-dīn Balkhī says about the importance of politeness in Mathnawī Ma'nawī, book one:

از خدا جوییم توفیق ادب — بی‌ادب محروم ماند از لطف رب
بی‌ادب تنها نه خود را داشت بد — بلکه آتش در همه آفاق زد

With hearts uplifted, to the heavens, we cry,
For grace to walk in manners, pure and high.
For those who stumble, lacking virtue's art,
From God's embrace, they stay forever apart.
The ill-tongued soul, by rudeness, self-confined,
Does wound not just their heart but all mankind.
A spark of disrespect, a flame of strife,
Can set the world ablaze with bitter life.

هرچه بر تو آید از ظلمات و غم — آن ز بی‌باکی و گستاخی است هم
هر که بی‌باکی کند در راه دوست — رهزن مردان شد و نامرد اوست
از ادب پر نور گشته است این فلک — و ز ادب معصوم و پاک آمد ملک.

When shadows fall, and sorrows fill your days,
Know recklessness has paved these darkened ways.
For one who strides on love's path unrefined,
Becomes a thief of hearts, a coward's mind.
But manners, like a sun, dispel the night,
With gentle light, they bring a world of right.
By the grace of courtesy, the heavens gleam,
And angels bathed in virtue brightly beam.

[9] For more information about the issue of keeping politeness, refer to Lubb al-Lubāb, pp. 116-118.

[10] Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid wa silāḥ al-muta'abbid, vol. 2, p. 847; Iqbal al-A'mal (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fi-mā Yu'malu Marratan fi al-Sanah), vol. 2, p. 708. Verses from Kumayl's prayer.

[11] For more information, refer to Matl' Al-Anwār, vol. 2, p. 240.

[12]Dīwān Ibn Fārid, p. 99:

عذّب بما شئت غير البعد عنك، تجد أوفى محبٍّ بما يرضيك مبتهج.

Torment me with whatever you want, except for separation and absence, so that you find me loyal and in love, accepting whatever makes you happy and rushing to it with joy and delight.

Though shadows gather, darkness fills my days,
And trials test me in a thousand ways,
Let absence never be the torment's sting,
For love without you, love cannot take wing.
Pile hardships high, let doubts and fears arise,
Command me, loved one, with your fiercest eyes.
A loyal heart I'll offer, ever true,
Embracing all that makes your spirit new.
With eager steps through fire I'll gladly run,
To greet your joy, the rising of the sun.
For in your happiness, my solace lies,
And love's delight will light up my own skies.

[13] For more information about the spiritual conditions of the late Āyatullāh Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Gulpāyigānī, refer to 'Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 9, p. 115; Matl' Al-Anwār, Volume 2, pp. 397-422.

[14] Al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 67:

عن جابر، عن أبي‌جعفر عليه السّلام قال: كان رسول الله صلّى الله عليه و آله و سلّم يقبل بوجهه إلى النّاس فيقول: يا معشر النّاس إذا طلع هلال شهر رمضان غلّت مردة الشّياطين، و فتّحت أبواب السّماء و أبواب الجنان و أبواب الرّحمة، و غلّقت أبواب النّار، و استجيب الدّعاء، و كان للّه فيه عند كلّ فطر عتقاء يعتقهم الله من النّار، و ينادي مناد كلّ ليلة: "هل من سائل؟ هل من مستغفر؟ اللهمّ أعط كلّ منفق خلفا، و أعط كلّ ممسك تلفا!" حتّى إذا طلع هلال شوّال نودي المؤمنون: "أن اغدوا إلى جوائزكم فهو يوم الجائزة." ثمّ قال أبوجعفر عليه السّلام: أما ـ و الّذي نفسي بيده ـ ما هي بجائزة الدّنانير و لا الدّراهم.

According to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, it is narrated that the Prophet would say during the sighting of the crescent moon for Ramadan: People! With the appearance of the crescent moon of Ramadan, the devils and rebellious ones are chained, the gates of Paradise are opened wide, the gates of Hell are sealed, and supplications are answered. Allah liberates specific individuals from the Hellfire at every fast-breaking. Additionally, a herald announces each night, 'Are there any supplicants or those seeking forgiveness?' Allah grants to those who spend generously and denies those who withhold or act stingily. When the crescent moon of Shawwal appears, believers are called upon, 'Approach your rewards, for today is the day of receiving them!' Imam al-Sadiq then clarifies that the "rewards" are not material possessions but spiritual gifts and blessings.

[15] Uddat al-Dā'i, p. 48; Tafsīr al-Qumī, vol. 2, p. 204.

[16] For more information about the politeness of the Prophets (peace be upon them) in the Holy Qur'an, the meaning of politeness, and its examples in different societies, refer to al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān, vol. 6, pp. 366-433.

[17] Nahj al-Balāghah (`Abduh), vol. 4, p. 234.

مسكين ابن آدم؛ مكتوم الأجل، مكنون العلل، محفوظ العمل، تؤلمه البقّة و تقتله الشّرقة و تنتنه العرقة.

Poor child of Adam; the time of his death is hidden, his diseases and pains are covered from him, his actions are recorded, a mosquito bothers him, a sip of water takes away his feet, and a drop of sweat makes his smell stink! (research fellow)

[18] Quran, 59:22.
[19] Quran, 3: 54.
[20] Quran, 4:142.
[21] For more information about the meaning of God's deception and the quality of man's deception returning to himself, refer to al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān, vol. 5, p. 116; for information about the reprehensible plot and the praised plot, refer to al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān, vol. 9, p. 66.

[22] Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p. 845, verses from Kumayl's prayer. Translation: And escape from the realm of your government and authority is not possible! (research fellow)

[23] Jāmi' Al-Akhbār, Shu'ayrī, p. 130:

و رُوِی عن الحسین بن علی علیهما السّلام: أنّه جاءَ رجلٌ و قال: أنا رجلٌ عاصٍ، و لا أصبرُ عن المعصیة؛ فعظنی بموعظة. فقال علیه السّلام: "افعل خمسة أشیاء، و أذنب ما شئتَ. فأوّلُ ذلک: لا تأکل رزقَ الله، و أذنب ما شئتَ. و الثّانی: أخرج من ولایة الله، و أذنب ما شئتَ. و الثّالث: اطلب موضعًا لا یراکَ اللهُ، و أذنب ما شئتَ. و الرّابع: إذا جاءَ ملکُ الموت لیقبض روحَک، فادفعه عن نفسک، و أذنب ما شئتَ. و الخامس: إذا أدخلکَ مالکٌ فی النّار، فلا تدخل فی النّار، و أذنب ما شئتَ.

Lama'āt al-Ḥusayn, p. 24: It has been narrated that a man came to Imam Ḥusayn bin Ali, peace be upon him, and said: I am a sinful man, and I cannot be patient and avoid sin; so please give me some advice. Ḥaḍrat answered him: Do five things, and then commit any sin you want! Firstly, do not consume from God's sustenance, and do whatever sin you want! Secondly, get out of God's guardianship and do whatever sin you want! Thirdly, seek a place where God will not see you and commit any sin you want! Fourthly, when the Angel of Death comes, turn him away and commit any sin you want. Fifthly, If the guardian angel of Hell wants to throw you into the fire, do not enter the fire, and do whatever sin you want!
[24] Quran, 12:21. And God is supreme over His command, but most people don't know. (research fellow)

[25] Miṣbāḥ al-Kaf'amī (Junnat al-amān al-wāqīya wa jannat al-īmān al-bāqīya), p. 83. Rūḥ Mujarrad, p. 509:

In the qunuts of prayer, there were many times when [Ḥaḍrat Ḥaddād] recited the following prayer:

أعددتُ لکلّ هولٍ لا إله إلّا اللهُ، و لکلّ همٍّ و غمٍّ ما شاءَ اللهُ، و لکلّ نعمةٍ الحمدُ لله، و لکلّ رخاءٍ و شدّةٍ الشّکرُ لله، و لکلّ أعجوبةٍ سبحانَ الله، و لکلّ ذنبٍ أستغفرُ الله، و لکلّ مصیبةٍ إنّا لله و إنّا إلیه راجعون، و لکلّ ضیقٍ حسبیَ اللهُ، و لکلّ قضاءٍ و قدرٍ توکّلتُ علی الله، و لکلّ عدوٍّ اعتصمتُ بالله، و لکلّ طاعةٍ و معصیةٍ لا حولَ و لا قوّةَ إلّا بالله العلیّ العظیم.

For every fear, I have prepared and stored "لا إله إلّا الله, La ilaha illallah, There is no god but Allah".
For every sadness and sorrow, I have prepared and stored "ما شاءَ الله, Ma sha Allah, What Allah wills".
I have prepared and stored "الحمدُ لله Alhamdulillah, Praise be to Allah" for every blessing.
I have prepared and stored "الشّکرُ لله Alshukrulillah, Thank you, Allah" for every comfort and difficulty.
For every surprise, I have prepared and stored "سبحانَ الله, Subhan Allah, Glory be to God".
I have prepared and stored "أستغفرُ الله Astghfiru Allah, I seek forgiveness from Allah" for every sin.
I have prepared and stored "إنّا لله و إنّا إلیه راجعون Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un, To Allah we belong, and to Him we will return" for every calamity.
For every hardship, I have prepared and stored ", حسبیَ الله Hasbi Allah, Allah is sufficient for me".
For every event and fate, I have prepared and stored "توکّلتُ علی الله, Tawakkaltu ala Allah, I put my trust in Allah".

For every enmity, I have prepared and stored "اعتصمت بالله, I'tasamtu billah, I seek refuge in Allah".
For every obedience and disobedience, I have prepared and stored " لا حول و لا قوة إلا بالله العلی العظیم , : La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah , There is no power and no strength except in Allah, the Most High, the Most Great".*

*Rūḥ Mujarrad, pp. 509, the commentary of this prayer was recited with the same quality by Allamah Tihrani.

[26] For more information on the "nothing knows anything except by what it has of it. 'لا يعرف شيء شيئا إلا بما هو فيه منه' rule, refer to Allāh Shināsī, vol. 1, pp. 92-97.

[27]*Mir'*āt *al-'uqūl*, vol. 7, pp. 135; Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 66, pp. 134.

[28]Niẓāmī Ganjawī, Abū Muḥammad Ilyās ibn-Yūsuf, Khusrūw and Shīrīn, Khamsa.

[29] Quran, 14:22. Allāh Shināsī, vol. 2, p. 154: Their messengers said, 'Is there doubt in Allah that He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth?

[30] Majmū'at rasā'il, al-Fayḍ" al-Kāshānī, vol. 1, p. 33.

[31] Mathnawī Ma'nawī, chapter 2.

[32]Ibid.

[33] Quran, 41:44. Allāh Shināsī, vol. 3, p. 169: Those will be called from a distant place.

[34] Gulshan Rāz, p. 25.

تو از عالم همین لفظی شنیدی / بیا بر گوی کز عالم چه دیدی؟
چه دانستی ز صورت یا ز معنی / چه باشد آخرت چونست دنیی؟
بگو سیمرغ و کوه قاف چبود؟ / بهشت و دوزخ و اعراف چبود؟
کدام است آن جهان کان نیست پیدا / که یک روزش بود یک سال اینجا!
دلیران جهان آغشته در خون / تو سر پوشیده ننهی پای بیرون
چه کردی فهم ازین دین العجائز / که بر خود جهل می‌داری تو جائز؟
زنان چون ناقصان عقل و دینند / چرا مردان ره ایشان گزینند؟
اگر مردی برون آی و سفر کن / هر آنچ آید به پیشت زان گذر کن
برون آی از سرای ام هانی / بگو مطلق حدیث «من رآنی»!
گذاری کن ز کاف و نون کونین / نشین بر قاف قرب قاب قوسین!
دهد حق مر ترا هرچ آن بخواهی / نمایندت همه اشیا کما هی.

A world unveiled, its secrets craved,
A whispered tale, a vision saved.
What form it held, what meaning true,
The afterlife for skies of blue?
Simorgh, a myth, a mountain grand,
Qaf's icy peak, a promised land.
Heaven's embrace, a fiery hell,
Araf's border, where shadows dwell.
A hidden world, a time apart,
One day within, a year's long heart.
Bloodshed stains the valiant's fight,
No open sky, a hooded plight.
The wisdom old, its whispers faint,
Does ignorance forever taint?
Women, a flaw in reason's hold,
Men's path unfurled, a story told.
A call to rise, to venture forth,
Embrace the unknown, from south to north.
Leave walls behind, let trials unfold,
Speak forth the truth, both brave and bold.
Through worlds unseen, a journey start,
To Qab Qusain, the Prophet's heart.
The Truth shall guide, a boundless grace,
Revealing all, in wisdom's space.

[35] Nahj al-Balāghah ('Abduh), vol. 4, p. 190:
و قال علیه السلام: عرفت الله سبحانه بفسخ العزائم و حل العقود و نقض الهمم.

And he said, 'I came to know Allah, the Exalted, through the breaking of resolves, the undoing of knots, and the thwarting of ambitions.'

[36] This phrase is from Quran, 85:3: "وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ"

[37] Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-Sanah), vol. 1, p. 350, below the Arafah prayer (with some differences).

[38] Kifāyat al-athar, pp. 256 (with some differences).

[39] Tawḥīd-i 'ilmī wa'aynī, pp. 191, commentary:

The hadith "ما رأيتُ شيئًا إلا و رأيتُ الله قبلَه" (I have not seen anything except that I saw Allah before it) is mentioned by the late Mulla Sadra in his Asfar Arba'ah, lithographic edition, vol. 1, p. 26, and typographic edition, vol. 1, p. 117. It is also mentioned by the late Sabziwārī in his commentary on his Manẓumah, p. 66 of the Nasiri edition, regarding the quality of the qualification of the known cause. "The late Mullā Ṣadrā, after narrating the hadith, narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, that:

و روى معهُ و فيه؛ يعنى: ما رأيت شيئًا إلاّ و رأيتُ الله معه و فيه.

The late scholar and religious figure, Ḥāj Mīrzā Jawād Malkī Tabrīzī (may God be pleased with him), in Secrets of Prayer(Asrār al-ṣalāh), p. 65, says: Amir al-Mumini said:

"ما نظرتُ إلى شيء إلاّ و رأيتُ الله قبلَه و بعدَه و معَه." And in the Risālah liqa Allah, page 7 says:

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "ما رأيتُ إلاّ و رأيت الله قبله و بعده و معه."

I have never seen anything except that I saw Allah before it, after it, and with it.

[40] For more information on this, refer to Allāh Shināsī, vol. 1, p. 251.

[41] Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-Sanah), vol. 1, pp. 348-349.

[42] al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p83:

عليُّ بنُ إبراهيمَ عن أبيه عن ابن أبيعُمَير عن عليّ بن عطيّة عن خَيثمة عن أبيجعفر عليه السّلام قال: "إنّ الله خِلوٌ من خلقه، و خلقُه خِلوٌ منه، و كلّ ما وقع عليه اسمُ شيء ما خلا الله تعالى فهو مخلوقٌ، و اللهُ خالقُ كلّ شيء."

Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from Ibn Abi Umayr, from Ali ibn Atiyya, from Khaythama, from Abu Jaafar, peace be upon him, said: "Verily, Allah is free from His creation, and His creation is free from Him. And everything that is called a thing, except Allah, the Most High, is created. And Allah is the Creator of everything."

Tawḥīd-i 'ilmī wa'aynī, p. 210: The late Sabziwārī (may God sanctify his soul) in his commentary on his own Manẓumah, on page 66 of the Naserite edition, regarding the quality of the dependence of the caused upon the cause, says:

و هو متقومٌ بالعلّة، أى ليست العلّةُ خارجةً عنه بحيث لا مرتبةَ له خاليةً عنها و لا ظهورَ له خاليًا عن ظهورها؛ بل الظهور لها أوّلاً و له ثانيًا كما قال عليه السّلام: "ما رأيتُ شيئًا إلاّ و رأيتُ الله قبله." و قال: "داخلٌ فى الأشياء لا بالممازجة و خارجٌ عن الأشياء لا بالمزايلة." و أيضًا: "ليس فى الأشياء بوالج و لا عنها بخارج." و أيضًا: "معَ كلِّ شىء لا بمقارنة و غير كلّ شىء لا بمزايلة." و أيضًا: "داخل فى الاشياء لا كدخول شىء فى شىء؛ خارج عن الأشياء لا كخروج شىء عن شىء." و أيضًا: "توحيدُه تمييزُه عن خلقه، و حكم التمييز بينونةُ صفة لا بينونةُ عُزلة." و بالجملة هذا متواترٌ بالمعنى.

He (God) is constituted by the attribute (of existence). This means that the attribute is not external to Him, such that He could ever be conceived of as devoid of it, nor does He manifest Himself without the manifestation of the attribute. Instead, the attribute manifests first, and then He manifests Himself. As the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "I have not seen anything without seeing God before it." And he also said: "He is within things, not by intermingling, and He is outside of things, not by separation." Additionally: "He is not within things with a body, nor is He outside of them by being distant." Furthermore: "He is with everything, not by being in contact, and He is distinct from everything, not by separation." And: "His oneness is His distinction from His creation, and the

distinction necessitates a difference in attribute, not a separation in location."

al-Tawḥīd(lilsaduq) , pp. 306:

هو في الأشياء على غير ممازجة، خارج منها على غير مباينة، فوق كل شيء فلا يقال شيء فوقه، و أمام كل شيء فلا يقال له أمام، داخل في الأشياء لا كشيء في شيء داخل، و خارج منها لا كشيء من شيء خارج.

He is in things without being mixed, outside of them without being separated, above everything so that it cannot be said that anything is above Him, and before everything so that it cannot be said that He has a front. He is inside things, not like something inside something, and outside them, not like something outside something.

[43] Al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 85:

عن علي بن عقبة بن قيس بن سمعان بن أبي ربيحة مولى رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله قال: سئل أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام بم عرفت ربك؟ قال: "بما عرفني نفسه!" قيل: و كيف عرفك نفسه؟ قال: "لا يشبهه صورة، و لا يحس بالحواس، و لا يقاس بالناس، قريب في بعده، بعيد في قربه، فوق كل شيء و لا يقال شيء فوقه، أمام كل شيء و لا يقال له أمام، داخل في الأشياء لا كشيء داخل في شيء، و خارج من الأشياء لا كشيء خارج من شيء، سبحان من هو هكذا و لا هكذا غيره، و لكل شيء مبدأ".

According to Ali ibn Uqba ibn Qais ibn Sim`an ibn Abi Rahibah, a freedman of the Messenger of God (may peace and blessings be upon him): The Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) was asked, "How did you come to know your Lord?" He replied, "By how He made Himself known to me!" They said, "And how did He make Himself known to you?" He said, "He does not resemble anything in form, nor do The senses perceive him, nor can He be compared to created beings. He is near in His remoteness and far in His nearness. He is above everything, but it cannot be said that anything is above Him. He is before everything, but it cannot be said that He has a before. He is within things, not like something being inside something else. And He is outside of things, unlike something being outside of something else. Glory be to Him; He is the One who is, and there is none other than Him, and He is the Origin of all things."

[44] Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-Sanah), vol. 1, pp. 348-349.

[45] Gulshan Rāz, p. 19.

[46] Sharḥ Asmā al-Husnā, p. 3

[47]Dīwān Manṣūr Ḥallāj, p. 226. Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 5, p. 25:

[48] Quran, 53:23. Nūr Malakūt Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 311: They are not but names that you and your fathers have given names to. God has not given any power or kingship to descend among them.

[49] Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-Sanah), vol. 1, pp. 349.

[50] Quran, 50: 16-17.

[51]

کی رفته‌ای ز دل که تمنا کنم تو را — کی بوده‌ای نهفته که پیدا کنم تو را
غیبت نکرده‌ای که شوم طالب حضور — پنهان نگشته‌ای که هویدا کنم تو را
با صد هزار جلوه برون آمدی که من — با صد هزار دیده تماشا کنم تو را
چشمم به صد مجاهده آیینه‌ساز شد — تا من به یک مشاهده شیدا کنم تو را
بالای خود در آینه چشم من ببین — تا با خبر ز عالم بالا کنم تو را
مستانه کاش در حرم و دیر بگذری — تا قبله‌گاه مؤمن و ترسا کنم تو را
خواهم شبی نقاب ز رویت بر افکنم — خورشید کعبه، ماه کلیسا کنم تو را.

Where have you gone from my heart that I should long for you? When were you hidden that I should find you? You have not been absent that I should become a seeker of your presence, You have not been hidden that I should reveal you.

With a hundred thousand manifestations, you have come forth,
That with a hundred thousand eyes, I should gaze upon you.
My eyes have become mirror-makers through a hundred struggles,
That with one glimpse, I should be enamored of you.

Look upon yourself in the mirror of my eye,
That I should bring news of the world above to you.
May you pass by the mosque and the monastery inebriated,
That I should make you the qiblah of the believer and the infidel.
I want to lift the veil from your face one night,
I want to make you the sun of the Kaaba, the moon of the church.

[52] al-'Amālī, (Ṣadūq)pp. 216:

عن إسماعيل الجعفي أنه سمع أباجعفر عليه السلام يقول: "قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله: أعطيت خمسا لم يعطها أحد قبلي: جعلت لي الأرض مسجدا و طهورا، و أحل لي المغنم، و نصرت بالرعب، و أعطيت جوامع الكلام، و أعطيت.

From Ismail al-Ju'fi, that he heard Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) say: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: 'I was given five things that no one before me was given: The earth was made a mosque and a place of purification for me. The spoils of war were made lawful for me. Allah made me victorious by His frightening my enemies. I was given the comprehensive words of the Qur'an. I was given the intercession (shafā'at).

[53] Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-Sanah), vol. 1, pp. 349.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 1, p. 411; 'Ilām al-wará bi-a'lām al-hudá, p. 432.

[56] Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-Sanah), vol. 1, pp. 350.

و أنت الذى لا إله غيرك، تعرفت لكل شيء فما جهلك شيء، و أنت الذى تعرفت إلى فى كل شيء فرأيتك ظاهرا فى كل شيء، و أنت الظاهر لكل شيء.

And You are the One besides Whom there is no deity, You have made Yourself known to everything, so nothing is ignorant of You. And You are the One who has made Yourself known to me in everything, so I have seen You manifest in everything. And You are the manifest to everything.

Allāh Shināsī, vol. 1, p. 267:

And You are the one besides whom there is no god [worthy of worship]. You have knowledge of all things, and nothing is hidden from You. You are the one who has made Yourself known to me in everything, and I have seen Your manifestation in everything. And You are the manifest (ẓāhir) to everything.

[57] Quran, 2:186.

[58] al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p.160:

يا الهى، يا رحمن يا الله، يا رحيم يا الله، يا الله يا الله! لك الأسماء الحسنى و الأمثال العليا و الكبرياء و الآلاء.

A passage from the Dua (prayer) of the 20th night of Ramadan.

[59] Quran, 57:11.

[60] Quran, 2:261.

[61] Quran, 3:189; Quran,5:17-18 and 120; Quran,24:42; Quran, 42:49; Quran:45:27; Quran, 48:14.

[62] Quran, 1:4.

[63] For more information on the virtues of reciting (مالك يوم الدين), please refer to the following sources: NoorNūr Malakūt Quran. , Vol. 4, p. 471; Mihr Tābān, p. 405; Matl' Al-Anwār, Vol. 6, p. 599.

[64] Yanābī' al-Ḥikmah, page 415.

[65] Quran, 22:11.

[66] Sunn al-Tirmidhī, vol. 4, p. 58, with some differences.

[67] Nahj al-Balāghah (`Abduh), vol. 1, pp. 165 and 166, with some differences.

[68] Adapted from Quran, 89:14:(إن ربك لبالمرصاد).

[69] Mustadrak al-wasā'il , p. 286:

و روى: "أن الله يقول: أنا جليس من ذكرنى و محب من أحبنى و مطيع من أطاعنى و مجيب من دعانى و غافر من استغفرنى.

Allah, the Most High, says: I am the companion of him who remembers Me, and I am the lover of him who loves Me, and I am the obedient of him who obeys Me, and I am the answerer of him who calls upon Me, and I am the forgiver of him who asks Me for forgiveness.

Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fi-mā Yu'malu Marratan fi al-Sanah), vol. 2, p. 628:

يَقُولُ اللهُ تَعالى: أنا جليسُ من جالسَني و مُطيعُ من أطاعني و غافرُ من استغفرني.

[70] Quran, 39:67.

[71] Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p. 582, excerpts from Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī supplication:

وَ الحَمدُ لِلّهِ الّذي أسألُه فَيُعطيني، و إن كُنتُ بخيلاً حينَ يَستَقرِضُني.

[72] Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh, vol. 1, p. 25; Da'āim al-Islam, vol. 1, p. 104; al-Muqni'ah, p. 39.

[73] Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh, vol. 1, pp. 23-25.

[74] al-Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 532:

عن أبيخديجةَ عن أبيعبدِالله عليه السّلام قال: "إنّ الدّعاءَ قبلَ طُلوعِ الشّمسِ و قبلَ غُروبِها سُنّةٌ واجبةٌ مع طلوعِ الفجرِ و المَغرِبِ؛ تَقولُ: لا إلهَ إلاّ اللهُ وَحدَهُ لا شَريكَ له، له المُلكُ و له الحَمدُ، يُحيي و يُميتُ و يُميتُ و يُحيي، و هو حيٌّ لا يَموتُ، بِيَدِهِ الخَيرُ و هو على كُلِّ شَيءٍ قَديرٌ! عَشرَ مَرّاتٍ؛ و تَقولُ: أعوذُ بِاللهِ السّميعِ العَليمِ مِن هَمَزاتِ الشّياطينِ، و أعوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أن يَحضُرُونِ، إنّ اللهَ هو السّميعُ العَليمُ! عَشرَ مَرّاتٍ قَبلَ طُلوعِ الشّمسِ و قَبلَ الغُروبِ. فإن نَسيتَ قَضَيتَ كَما تَقضي الصّلاةَ إذا نَسيتَها.

Abu Khadijah narrated from Abi Abdillah (peace be upon him) who said: Supplication before sunrise and before sunset is a recommended practice along with the rising of dawnand sunset. You say:

لا إلهَ إلاّ اللهُ وَحدَهُ لا شَريكَ له، له المُلكُ و له الحَمدُ، يُحيي و يُميتُ و يُميتُ و يُحيي، و هو حيٌّ لا يَموتُ، بِيَدِهِ الخَيرُ و هو على كُلِّ شَيءٍ قَديرٌ!

There is only one God, Allah, who exists without any partners. Dominion and all praise belong to Him. He grants life and causes death, with an unending cycle of life and death under His control. He is Everlasting and never dies. All good comes from Him, and He has ultimate power over all things, ten times. And you say:

أعوذُ بِاللهِ السّميعِ العَليمِ مِن هَمَزاتِ الشّياطينِ، و أعوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أن يَحضُرُونِ، إنّ اللهَ هو السّميعُ العَليمُ!

I seek refuge in Allah, the Hearing, the Knowing, from the evil promptings of the devils, and I seek refuge in You, my Lord, from their presence. Indeed, Allah is the Hearing, the Knowing! ten times before sunrise and before sunset. If you forget, you make it up as you make up the prayer if you forget it.

[75] For information on the prayers to be recited when going to sleep and waking up in the middle of the night, please refer to al-Khiṣāl, vol. 2, p. 625; al-Muqn'i (by Al-Saduq), p. 545; Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 1, p. 127; al-Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 538.

[76] Tahdhīb al-aḥkām, vol. 1, p. 27.

عن زرارةَ و محمّدِ بن مسلم، عن أبيجعفر عليه السّلام قال: "قلتُ: الحائضُ و الجُنُب يقرءان شيئاً؟ قال: نَعَم، ما شاءا إلاّ السّجدة، و يَذكُران اللهَ تعالى على كلِّ حال.

Zurarah and Muhammad ibn Muslim narrated from Imam Baqir (peace be upon him): Zurarah said: I asked, "Can a menstruating woman and a person in a state of الجنابة (major ritual impurity) recite the Quran?" The Imam said: "Yes, they can recite as much of the Quran as they wish, except for the verse of prostration. And they can remember God in any state."

عن سليمان بن خالد، عن أبيعبدالله عليه السّلام قال: "إنّ موسى عليه السّلام قال: يا ربِّ، تَمُرُّ بي حالاتٌ أستَحيي أن أذكُرَكَ فيها! فقال: يا موسى! ذِكري على كلِّ حالٍ حَسَنٌ.

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) that he said: Ḥaḍrat Moses (peace be upon him) said to God: O Lord!! There are times when I am ashamed to remember You in those states. The Lord said: Moses! Remembering Me is good in every situation.

[77] Refer to the beginning of the second part of this book.

[78] For more information on this subject refer to Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 9, p. 74.

[79] Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-Sanah), vol. 1, p. 349:

[إلهی] ما ذا وَجدَ مَن فقدکَ و ما الّذی فقدَ مَن وَجدکَ...

[80] Quran, 22:11.

[81] Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 91, p. 147, excerpts from Munājāt Murīdīn.

[82] Dīwān Furuwghī Basṭāmī, Ghazal. 9.

کی رفته‌ای ز دل که تمنا کنم تو را | کی بوده‌ای نهفته که پیدا کنم تو را
غیبت نکرده‌ای که شوم طالب حضور | پنهان نگشته‌ای که هویدا کنم تو را
با صد هزار جلوه برون آمدی که من | با صد هزار دیده تماشا کنم تو را.

When from my heart did you depart, my love, That yearning fills my every thought of you?

When were you veiled, a hidden, distant star, That I must search the heavens, near and far?

No absence yours that bids me seek your face, No hidden form that calls for me to trace.

A hundred thousand guises you unfold, A hundred thousand eyes I hold.

[83] al-Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 435:

عَن جابِرٍ، عَن أبی‌جَعفرٍ علیه السّلام قال: سَمِعتُهُ یَقولُ: "التّائِبُ مِنَ الذّنبِ کَمَن لا ذَنبَ لَهُ، و المُقیمُ عَلَى الذّنبِ و هُوَ مُستَغفِرٌ مِنهُ کالمُستَهزِئ.

Jabir narrated from Imam Baqir (peace be upon him), who said: He who repents from sin is like one who has never sinned. And the one who persists in sin and then seeks forgiveness for, it is like the one who mocks and ridicules.

[84] Quran, 2:264.

[85] Quran, 5:48. Nūr Malakūt Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 37:

For each of you, We have appointed a Shari'ah and a means of reaching the truth and a path toward spiritual perfection.

[86] al-Kāfi, vol. 2. p. 593:

عن أبی‌بصیر عن أبی‌عبدالله علیه السّلام فقال: "قُلِ اللّهُمّ إنّی أسألُکَ... یا مَن لا تُغَلِّطُهُ المَسائِلُ، یا مَن لا یَشغَلُهُ شَیءٌ عَن شَیءٍ، و لا سَمعٌ عَن سَمعٍ و لا بَصَرٌ عَن بَصَرٍ، و لا یُبرِمُهُ إلحاحُ المُلِحّینَ...

AbuBasir narrates that Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, said: O God, I call upon You... O You who are not confused by different questions. O You who are not distracted by one thing from another. O You who are not prevented from seeing one thing by seeing another. O You who are not tired and worn out by the insistence of the insistent.

[87] In Tadhkirah Riyāḍ al-'Ārifīn, p. 398, this poem is attributed to Muḥaqqiq Dawānī.

[88] Makārim al-akhlāq, pp. 433 and 440:

عن جعفر بن محمّد عن أبیه عن جدّه عن علیّ بن أبی‌طالب علیه السّلام عن النّبی صلّى الله علیه و آله و سلّم أنّه قال :یا علیّ أُوصیکَ بوصیّةٍ فاحفَظها فلن تزال بخیرٍ ما حَفِظتَ وصیّتی:... یا علیّ نَجَا المُخَفّفُون [المُخِفّونَ] و هَلَکَ المُثقَلونَ.

Narrated by Ja'far ibn Muhammad, from his father, from his grandfather, from Ali ibn Abi Talib (may peace be upon him), who related that the Prophet (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "O Ali, I commend you to a recommendation, so memorize it, for you will remain in goodness as long as you preserve my recommendation: ... O Ali, the light-laden will be saved, and the heavily-burdened will perish."

[89] al-Anwār an-Nu'māniyyah, page 1 of 43.

[90] Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, p. 583, excerpts from Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī supplication.

[91] Tafsīr Āyah Nūr, pp. 139.

[92] In Tadhkirah Riyāḍ al-'Ārifīn, p. 398, he considered these three verses to be among the lyrical poems of Muḥaqqiq Dawānī:

از تو تا مقصود چندان منزلی در پیش نیست — یک قدم بر هر دو عالم نه که گامی بیش نیست
معنی درویش اگر خواهی کمال نیستی است — هر که را هستی خود باقی است او درویش نیست
بندگی کن عشق را وز کفر و دین آزاد باش — از جدال آسوده شد هر کس که او را کیش نیست.

Not far the path to your desire unfolds,
One step, not two, and mysteries unfold.
The dervish seeks a state of pure release,
Where self dissolves, and perfect peace finds lease.
Hold tight to self, and you'll forever roam,
A servant be to love and find your home.
Unbind from dogma, cast aside all strife,
For freedom lies in love, the truest life.

93 A famous proverb asserts, "There is no city beyond Abadan".

94 Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p. 583, excerpts from Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī's supplication.

95 Ibid, p. 588, excerpts from Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī's supplication.

96 Quran, 4:32.

97 Quran, 4:29.

98Quran, 36:82.

99 Quran, 3:9; Quran, 13:31.

100 Quran, 19:54.

101 Quran, 13:16.

102 Quran, 4:32.

103 Quran, 4:29.

104 For more information on intercession, its meaning, the types of intercessors, and the conditions of those who can be interceded, refer to the book Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 9.

105 Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 84, p. 340, citing the Book of Al Akhtar of Sayyid ibn al-Baqi, excepts from Dua Ṣabāḥ.

106 Quran, 2:138.

107 Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p. 582.

108 Quran, 55:78.

109 al-A'mālī, Shaykh Ṣadūq, p. 43.

110 Mathnawī Ma'nawī, book three.

گفت آن الله تو لبیک ماست — وآن نیاز و درد و سوزت پیک ماست

He said, "Your 'Allah' is our 'Labbayk' (Here I am), And your need, pain, and ardor are our messenger."

111 For information about having good thoughts (حسن ظن - husn zann) and bad thoughts (سوء ظن - su' zann) about God, refer to Uṣūl al-Kāfi, volume 2, page 71.

112 For more information on how monotheism is an expiation of sins, please refer to Anwār al-Malakūt, volume 1, page 160.

113 Quran, 41:20.

114 Quran, 41:21.

115 Quran, 41:22-23.

116 Miṣbāḥ al-Sharī'ah and Miftāḥ al-Ḥaqīqah, p. 138:

قالَ رَسولُ اللهِ صلّى الله عليه و آله و سلّم: الدُّنيا جيفةٌ و طالبُها كِلابٌ.

The world is a place of carrion, and its seekers are dogs.

Ghurar al-ḥikam wa-durar al-kalim, p. 137:

قال أميرُ المؤمنينَ عليه السّلام: «إنّما الدُّنيا جيفةٌ و المُتَواخونَ [المؤاخوان] عليها أشباهُ الكِلابِ فلا يمنعُهُم أخوّتُهُم لها منَ التّهارُشِ عليها.

Worldliness is akin to scavenging, and those who agree to be brothers over it are like dogs. However, their brotherhood does not prevent them from going to war or conflict.

117Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fī-mā Yu'malu Marratan fī al-

Sanah), vol. 1, p. 68.

[118] Nahj al-Balāghah (ʿAbduh), vol. 2, p. 163.
[119] Quran, 40:19.
[120] Ghurar al-ḥikam wa-durar al-kalim, p. 246:
قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام: أحسن العفو ما كان عن قدرة.
Amir al-Mu'minin, peace be upon him, said: The best forgiveness is the forgiveness of one who has the power to forgive.
[121] Quran, 54:42.
[122] al-Kāfi, vol. 2. p. 578:
...يا من أظهر الجميل و ستر القبيح و لم يهتك الستر عني، يا كريم العفو، يا حسن التجاوز، يا واسع المغفرة...

[123]al-Tawḥīd , Shaykh Ṣadūq, p. 221.

[124]al-ṣaḥīfah al-ʿalawiyyah wa al-taḥfah al-murtaḍawiyyah, P. 198, Excerpts of Duʿā' Kumayl . Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, P. 846. with some differences. Translation: Your proof is sufficient for me in all the matters in which I have wronged you; and I have no proof for the verdict which you have pronounced against me, nor for the punishment which you have inflicted upon me. (research fellow)
[125] For more information on the issue of the non-artificial, non-advisory, and non-educational nature of the supplications, lamentations, prayers, and invocations of the Pure Imams (peace be upon them), please refer to the treatise "Lubb al-Lubāb", page 98.

[126] Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh, vol. 1, p. 519.

[127] Jawāhir al-kalām fī sharḥ sharā'iʿ al-islām, vol. 11, p. 343. Anwār Malakūt, vol. 2, p. 298:
The Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, delivered a sermon on the Eid al-Adha:
فو الله لو حننتم حنين الواله العجلان [العجال] و دعوتم بمثل دعاء الأنام و جأرتم جؤار متبتلي الرهبان و خرجتم إلى الله من الأموال و الأولاد التماس القربة إليه في ارتفاع درجة عنده أو غفران سيئة أحصتها كتبته و حفظتها رسله، لكان قليلا فيما أرجو لكم من ثوابه و أتخوف عليكم من أليم عقابه! و بالله لو انماثت قلوبكم انمياثا و سالت عيونكم من رغبة إليه و رهبة منه دما ثم عمرتم في الدنيا ما كانت الدنيا باقية، ما جزت أعمالكم! و لو لم تبقوا شيئا من جهدكم لنعمه العظام عليكم و هداه إياكم إلى الإيمان، ما كنتم لتستحقوا أبد الدهر! ما الدهر قائم بأعمالكم جنته و لا رحمته؛ و لكن برحمته ترحمون و بهداه تهتدون و بهما إلى جنته تصيرون. جعلنا الله و إياكم [برحمته] من التائبين و العابدين!" - الخ.
The Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, said in his sermon on the Eid al-Adha: By God, if you cry out like the cry of a distraught victim of calamity, and call upon God like the prayer of people for the removal of distress and anxiety, and raise your voices with supplication and entreaty like a person who is hopeless of the world and turned towards God, and give up your wealth and children in the way of God for the sake of drawing near to Him and ascending to the degrees of قرب (nearness), or for the forgiveness of a sin from the sins that His recorders have recorded and His messengers have preserved, all of this will be very little and insignificant compared to the hope that I have for the reward from God or the fear of His punishment and retribution for you.

And by Allah, if your hearts melt and your eyes bleed for closeness to Him or fear of Him and you live the life of this world, your deeds will not suffice.

And if you do not make every effort to be grateful for Allah's blessings upon you and His guidance, you will not be worthy of it, nor will you be guided. It is not that the world will reward you with Paradise and the mercy of God for these actions, but rather through the mercy of God you will be shown mercy, and through His guidance you will be guided, and through these two you will be led to Paradise. May God make us and you among those who repent and worship.

[128] Excerpts from Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī's supplication.

[129] al-Kāfī, vol. 2. p. 445:

عن أبی‌عبدالله علیه السّلام قال: قال امیرُالمؤمنین علیه السّلام فی قولِ اللهِ عزّوجلّ (وَمَا أَصَابَكُم مِّن مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَن كَثِيرٍ) *: لیسَ مِن التِواءِ عِرقٍ و لا نَکبةِ حَجَرٍ و لا عَثرةِ قَدَمٍ و لا خَدشِ عودٍ إلاّ بذنبٍ، و لَما یعفو الله أکثرُ؛ فمَن عجّل اللهُ عقوبةَ ذنبِه فی الدّنیا، فإنّ اللهَ عزّوجلّ اجلّ و اکرمُ و أعظمُ مِن أن یعودَ فی عقوبتِه فی الآخرة.

The Commander of the Faithful, upon whom be peace, regarding the saying of the Exalted God: "Whatever misfortune strikes you is because of what your hands have earned, and He pardons much." He said: Every twist of a vein, every stone that is struck, every slip of the foot, and every scratch from a stick is only because of a sin that a person has committed. And what God gives is more. And whoever Allah has hastened his punishment in this world, Allah is Exalted, Most Great, and Generous to punish him in the Hereafter as well.
Quran, 42:30.

[130] Ma'ānī l-'Akhbār, p. 21:

عن جابرِ بنِ یزیدَ الجُعفی، عن أبی‌جعفرٍ محمّدِ بن علیٍّ الباقرِ علیهما السّلام، قال: سألتُه عَن معنی "لا حولَ و لا قوّةَ إلاّ بالله"، فقال: مَعناه: لا حولَ لنا عَن مَعصیةِ اللهِ إلاّ بعونِ اللهِ، و لا قوّةَ لَنا علی طاعةِ اللهِ إلاّ بتوفیقِ اللهِ عزّوجلّ.

Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi said: I asked Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him) about the meaning of "لا حولَ و لا قوّةَ إلاّ بالله" (There is no power nor strength except in Allah), and he said: We have no power to avoid sinning except with the help of Allah, and we have no power to obey Allah except with the success of Allah.

[131] Dīwān Ḥāfiẓ, Ghazal. 7.

عنقا شکار کس نشود دام باز چین　　　　کانجا همیشه باد به دست است دام را

Anka is the prey of none—pluck your snare
There, ever, in the hand of the wind, is snare.

[132] al-Kāfī, vol. 2. p. 173: Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him.) said:

کانَ أبوجعفرٍ علیه السّلام یقولُ: عَظِّموا أصحابَکُم و وَقِّروهُم و لا یَتَجَهَّم بَعضُکُم بَعضًا و لا تَضارّوا و لا تَحاسَدوا؛ و إیّاکُم و البُخلَ! کونوا عبادَ اللهِ المُخلِصین.

Imam Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (peace be upon him) used to say: Hold your friends and companions in high esteem and respect them. Do not meet each other with bad manners and a sour face. Do not harm each other. Avoid envying each other. Avoid stinginess. Be sincere servants of Allah. (research fellow)

[133] Dīwān Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, Pezhmān, Ghazal. 431.

[134] Anwār Malakūt Qur'ān, vol. 1, p. 102, commentary.

[135] Al-'Amālī, Shaykh Ṣadūq, p. 369:

و حقّ الصّلاةِ أن تَعلَمَ أنّها وفادةٌ إلی الله عزّوجلّ.

[136] Makārim Al-Akhlāq, p. 419:

و حقّ الصّلاةِ أن تَعلَمَ أنّها مرقاةٌ إلی الله عزّوجلّ.

[137] Quran, 25:70.
[138] For more information about 'Conversion of Sins to Goodness,' refer to Anwār Malakūt, vol. 1, pp. 159-165; Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 8, p. 345.
[139] Quran, 5:64.
[140] For more information, refer to Imām Shināsī; Vol. 1, p. 389.
[141] Reference is made to Quran, 2:80, which says:

وَقَالُوا لَن تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَن يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ.

Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 10, p.307: And (the Jews) say: Never will the fire touch us except for a few days!" Say: "Have you received a covenant from God concerning this saying of yours, so that God will not break His promise, and He will not burn you in the Fire except for a brief time?! Or is it that you lie against Allah without knowledge?
[142] For information on the "arguments for refuting the claims of the Jews," see al-Mīzān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, vol. 5, p. 254.

[143] Majma' al-bahrayn, vol. 5, p. 236:

الملق (محركة): الود و اللطف، و أن يعطى فى اللسان ما ليس فى القلب؛ و الفعل كفرح. و قد يطلق الملق و التملق على التودد و التلطف و الخضوع التى يطابق فيها الجنان اللسان... و تملق إليه تملقا و تملاقا: أى تودد إليه و تلطف له... و رجل ملق: يعطى بلسانه ما ليس فى قلبه.

[144] al-Kāfi, vol. 2. p. 545:

Safwan al-Jammal narrates: I was with Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) during prayer. Before the Takbir al-ihram, he stood facing the qiblah and said:

اللهم لا تؤيسني من روحك و لا تقنطني من رحمتك و لا تؤمني مكرك، فإنه: فلا يأمن مكر الله إلا القوم الخاسرون.*

O Allah, do not make me despair of Your spirit, do not make me despair of Your mercy, and do not make me feel secure from Your deception, for indeed, only the losers feel secure from Allah's deception.

Sufyan said: I said, 'May my life be sacrificed for you!' I haven't heard this prayer from anyone before you! Hadrat said: Among the greatest of the great sins are despair of the mercy of Allah, despair of the help of Allah, and feeling secure from the deception of Allah."

إن من أكبر الكبائر عند الله اليأس من روح الله و القنوط من رحمة الله و الأمن من مكر الله.

*Quran, 7:99.

[145] Quran, 21:23.

[146] Allāh Shināsī, vol. 3, pp. 189-190; Al-Hikma al-muta'ālīya fi l-asfār al-'aqlīyya al-arba'a, vol. 1, p.132; Sharh al-Manzuma, vol.3, pp. 513-517.

[147] Sharh al-Manzuma, vol.3, pp. 513-517.

[148] Al-Hikma al-muta'ālīya, vol. 1, pp. 168-169; Sharh al-Manzuma, vol.2, pp. 255-260.

[149] Sharh al-Manzuma, vol.2, p. 96.

[150] Al-Hikma al-muta'ālīya, vol. 6, pp. 14-16.

[151] Ibid, pp. 321-322; Sharh al-Manzuma, pp. 262-264.

[152] For further information on the response to Ibn Kamuna's doubt, please refer to Tawhīd-i 'ilmī wa'aynī, pp. 280-288; Allāh Shināsī, Vol. 2, pp. 277-231 & Vol. 3, pp. 189-202; Matl' Al-Anwār, Vol. 5, pp. 135-137; Al-Hikma al-muta'ālīya, Vol. 1, p. 133; Sharh al-Manzuma Vol. 3, p. 519.

[153] Refer to Mihr Tābān, pp. 112-118.

[154] Refer to Mihr Tābān, p. 118.

[155] Quran, 7:54.

[156] Refer to Mihr Tābān, pp. 396-398.

[157] al-Ilahīyāt, Part 2, p. 267; Minhāj al-Jabr, Vol. 2, p. 1175.

[158] Miṣbāh al-faqīh, J7, p.297; Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 10, p. 273.

[159] For further information on the refutation of determinism and delegation and the validity of the theory of أمر بين الأمرين (the middle way), please refer to Ma'ād Shināsī, Vol. 10, pp. 269-295.

[160] Haft Awrang, Abdulrahmān jāmi, Silsila al-Dhahab.

[161] Arba'īn by Shaykh Bahā'ī, Naṣirī press (published in 1274 AH), within the commentary of the second hadith, pp. 16-18; Allah Shināsī, Vol. 3, pp. 20-26; Mir'āt al-'Uqūl, Vol. 9, p. 256.

[162] Tafsīr al-muhīṭ al-a'ẓam, vol. 6, Allāh Shināsī p.23; Jāmi' al-Asrar, p. 142 (with some differences); Allāh Shināsī. vol. 3, p.21:

كل ما ميزتموه بأوهامكم فى أدق معانيه مخلوق مصنوع مثلكم مردود إليكم؛ و لعل النمل الصغار تتوهم أن لله تعالى زبانيين، فإن ذلك كمالها، و تتوهم أن عدمهما نقصان لمن لا يتصف بهما. و هكذا حال العقلاء فيما يصفون الله تعالى به.

All the things you distinguish and discern with the most precise meanings with your

own thoughts and that you consider God are creations made by you, like yourself, and they return to you! Perhaps the little ants imagine that God also has two horns because their perfection is in that, and they think that not having them is a deficiency for someone not described by them. And so it is with the wise men of the world in the attributes that they describe God.

[163] Quran, 37:159-160.

[164] Dīwān Ḥāfiẓ, Ghazal. 7.

[165]Biḥār al-Anwār, J. 68, p.23; al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādīyah, p.38: سبحانک ما عبدناک حق عبادتک

[166]'Awālī al-la'āli', vol. 4, p. 132:

و قال [النبی صلّی الله علیه وآله و سلم]: سبحانک ما عرفناک حق معرفتک.

[167] For more information on "the method of burning in eliminating the purposes and intentions of the nafs of the traveler", please refer to the treatise "Lubb al-lubab", pp. 124-126, and "Risālah Siyr wa Suluk" attributed to Bahr al-'Ulūm, p. 155, commentary.

[168] Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrá, vol. 2, pp. 417: "Qalal-ul- 'Umar ibn al-Husayn".

قال علی رضی الله تعالی عنه: لکل شیء قیمة و قیمة المرء ما یحسنه.

Nahj al-Balāghah(Abdah), vol.4, pp. 154:

و قال علیه السلام: قیمة کل امرئ ما یحسنه.

[169] Dīwān Shayk Aḥmad, pp. 454:

تا یک سر موی از تو هستی باقیست آئین دکان خودپرستی باقیست
گفتی بت پندار شکستم رستم آن بت که ز پندار شکستی باقیست

[170] Misbah ash-Shari'ah, p. 196:

قال الصادق علیه السلام: "... و فسّر النبی صلّی الله علیه و آله و سلم عن حاله [موسی علیه السّلام] أنّه ما أکل و لا شرب و لا نام و لا اشتهی شیئا من ذلک فی ذهابه، و مجیئه أربعین یوما شوقا إلی ربّه...

It is narrated from the Imam (peace be upon him) that: '...And the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained his (Moses') state (as) being that he did not eat, drink, sleep, or desire any of that during his forty days of going and coming out of longing for his Lord...

[171] Nahj al-Balāghah (`Abduh), vol. 2, p. 57.

و إن شئت ثنّیت بموسی کلیم الله صلّی الله علیه و آله وسلّم إذ یقول (ربّ إنّی لما أنزلت إلیّ من خیر فقیر) والله ما سأله إلا خبزا یأکله لأنه یأکل بقلة الأرض، و لقد کانت خضرة البقل تری من شفیف صفاق بطنه لهزاله و تشذّب لحمه.

When he says, "Lord, I need the good that You have sent to me," I swear by God that he asked God for nothing but bread to eat because he ate the vegetables and plants of the earth, and from the intensity of his thinness the green color of the plants could be seen from under his thin stomach skin. (research fellow)

[172] al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Vol. 1, p. 153; al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah, Vol. 1, p. 235; al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Vol. 3, p. 5; Tārīkh Ṭabarī, Vol. 2, p. 300.

[173] A proverb asserts, "A drowning man will clutch at a straw." Translation from "Imām Shināsī, Vol. 11, p. 126.

[174] al-Kāfī, Vol. 2, p. 445; al-Khiṣāl, Vol. 2, p. 447; Rūḥ Mujarrad, p. 567

This narration is narrated by Kulaynī in uṣūl al-Kāfī al, and its exact content is as follows:

Abd al-Aziz al-Qaratisi narrated that he said:

قال لی ابو عبدالله علیه السّلام :یا عبد العزیز! إنّ الإیمان عشر درجات بمنزلة السّلّم؛ یصعد منه مرقاة بعد مرقاة و لا یقولنّ صاحب الاثنین لصاحب الواحد: لست علی شیء! حتّی ینتهی إلی العاشر..
فلا تسقط من هو دونک فیسقطک من هو فوقک. و إذا رأیت من هو أسفل منک بدرجة فارفعه إلیک برفق، و لا تحملنّ علیه ما لا یطیق فتکسره! فإنّ من کسر مؤمنا فعلیه جبره؛*

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said to me: O Abdul Aziz! Faith has ten degrees, like a ladder that must be ascended one step at a time. The one who has two degrees of faith should not say to the one who has one degree of faith, 'You have no position or rank in faith!'" And so on, degree by degree, until you reach the tenth degree.

And you should not degrade or belittle someone lower than you, for in doing so, you will be degraded and belittled by the one higher than you."

You should do so with kindness and gentleness when raising someone below you. Do not impose on them a speech or a matter that they cannot bear, for in this case, you will break them. And whoever breaks a believer is responsible for healing and bandaging the broken bones."*

*Uṣūl al-Kāfi, vol. 2, p.45.

175 al-Ghārāt, vol. 2, p. 823; ITafsīr Furāt al-Kūfi, p. 171.

176 Quran, 2:138:
color of Allah, and who is better than Allah at coloring. We are His worshippers.

177 Mathnawī Ma'nawī, vol. 5, p. 629.

مادح خورشید، مدّاح خود است   که دو چشمم روشن و نامرمد است.

178 Quran, 13:13.

179 Quran, 37:159-160.

180For more information on the quality of praise and glorification of the sincere, please refer to Allāh Shināsī, Vol. 2, p. 110; Imām Shināsī, Vol. 1, p. 45 & Vol. 5, p. 46; Ma'ād Shināsī, Vol. 9, p. 422.

181 Baṣa'ir ad-Darajāt, Vol. 1, pp. 61 & 64; al-Kāfi, Vol. 1, p. 145; Ma'ānī l-'Akhbār, p. 17.

182 Quran, 7:54.

183 Quran, 39:67. Allāh Shināsī, vol. 1, p. 267: And the heavens would be rolled up in His Power.

184 Tawḥīd-i 'ilmī wa'aynī, p. 20.

185 Quran, 3: 97.

186 Nahj al-Balāghah (`Abduh), vol. 4, p. 170.

187Quran, 3:189; Quran,5: 17, 18 and 120; Quran, 24:43; Quran, 42:49; Quran:45:27; Quran, 48:14.

188 Quran, 31:26.

189 Quran, 59:9. Quran, 64:16.

190 Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p. 844, a phrase from du'ā' kumayl.

191 Iqbāl al-A'māl, vol. 1, p. 169; Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p. 586: ليس هذا....

192 Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p. 583:

معرفتی یا مولای دلّتنی علیک و...

Iqbāl al-A'māl (al-Iqbāl bil-A'māl al-Ḥasanah fi-mā Yu'malu Marratan fi al-Sanah), vol. 1, p. 68.

193 Gulshan Rāz, p. 22.

In realms of might-have-been, a shadowed stain,
A wasted chance, a life of dreams in vain.
This world, the next, the burden I have sown,
A constant thorn, forever to be known.
God's wisdom sees the path I failed to tread,
The fallow ground where good deeds lay unsaid.
Disgrace clings tight, a soul forever marred,
A haunting echo, a promise left unscarred.

194 Bābā Ṭāhir's couplets, couplet number 37:

هر آنکس عاشق است از جان نترسد   یقین از بند و از زندان نترسد
دل عاشق بود گرگ گرسنه   که گرگ از هی هی چوپان نترسد.

In love's embrace, all fear takes flight,
No chains nor death can dim its light.
A lover's heart, a wolf unbound,
By shepherd's call, no fear is found.

195 Majma' al-baḥrayn, vol. 3, p.311:

الذِّكرُ هو حُضورُ المَعنىٰ فى النّفس" و قد يُستعمَل الذِّكرُ بمعنَى القول؛ لأنّ من شأنِهِ ان يُذكرَ بِهِ.

المعنى.

[196] Al-Kafi, vol. 2 , p. 87:

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: "اجتهدت في العبادة و أنا شاب، فقال لي أبي عليه السلام: يا بني، دون ما أراك تصنع! فإن الله عزوجل إذا أحب عبدا رضي عنه باليسير.

[197] Ghurar al-ḥikam wa-durar al-kalim, p. 505: Ḥaḍrat Imam Ali said:

قليل يدوم خير من كثير منقطع.

[198] Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh, vol. 1, p.481: Imam Muhammad Baqir (peace be upon him) in the interpretation of the following verse said:

تتجافى جنوبهم عن المضاجع يدعون ربهم خوفا و طمعا.*

أنزلت في أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام و أتباعه من شيعتنا؛ ينامون في أول الليل، فإذا ذهب ثلثا الليل أو ما شاء الله فزعوا إلى ربهم راغبين راهبين طامعين فيما عنده، فذكرهم الله عزوجل في كتابه لنبيه و أخبرهم بما أعطاهم و أنه أسكنهم في جواره و أدخلهم جنته و أمن خوفهم و أمن روعتهم...

This verse was revealed about the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and his followers, who are our Shia. They sleep at the beginning of the night, and when two-thirds of the night has passed, or as much as God wills, they rise from sleep and call upon their Lord, sometimes out of fear and hope. So God, The Exalted, mentions their name in His Book to His Prophet and informs the believers of what He has given them, that He has given them a place in His presence and admitted them to Paradise, and He has made them safe from fear and terror.

*Quran, 32:16. Ma'ād Shināsī, vol. 10, p. 154: The believers in Our signs prostrate themselves in prayer in the night hours.

[199] For more information, refer to the treatise "Lubb al-Lubāb," p. 106, and "Risālah Siyr wa Sulūk" attributed to Baḥr al-'Ulūm, p. 148.

[200] al-Kāfi, vol. 2. p. 87:

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: "قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله: يا علي، إن هذا الدين متين؛ فأوغل فيه برفق، و لا تبغض إلى نفسك عبادة ربك، فإن المنبت (يعني المفرط) لا ظهرا أبقى و لا أرضا قطع.

[201] Maqām wuṣūl (مقام وصول): This translates to "station of arrival" or "station of union" in Arabic. It refers to a spiritual state where the individual feels deeply connected with God. Maqām liqā' (مقام لقاء) or "station of encounter" refers to a spiritual state where the individual experiences a direct encounter with the Divine presence. Fana fi Allah (فناء في الله), or "annihilation in God," is a spiritual state in which an individual transcends their nafs and becomes wholly absorbed in the Divine.

[202] Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, vol. 2, p.586, excerpts from Abu Ḥamza al-Thumālī's supplication.

[203] Quran, 51:58. Risālah Nikāhīyah, p. 138: Surely Allah is the only One who is the Most Provident, the Mighty, and the Strong.

[204] For more information on the importance of performing Hajj at puberty and the effects of this obligatory act on the human soul and spirit, please refer to Rūḥ Mujarrad, p. 500.

[205] The following is narrated from the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his family) in Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh, Vol. 4, p. 379:

إن من الشعر لحكمة، و إن من البيان لسحرا.

Verily, some poetry is wisdom, and some speech is magic.

In Nūr Malakūt Quran, Vol. 2, p. 332, it is explained: Indeed, some types of poetry are wisdom, and some types of speech are so effective in conveying meaning and captivating the minds of the audience, using the arts of rhetoric and the use of metaphors and various types of metaphors, that they can be called types of magic.

[206] Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib, by Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Vol. 3, p. 180; Al Sunan Al Kubrā, by Bayhaqī, Vol. 4, p. 331; Sharḥ al-akhbār fī faḍā'il al-A'imma al-Aṭhār, Vol. 3, pp. 111 and 537.

[207] al-Khiṣāl, vol. 2, p. 518.

[208] For information on the *Tawassul*(resorting or seeking intercession) of the prophets to the *Khamsah Ṭayyaba* (five pure ones) and the descent of mercy upon them through the Ahl al-Bayt, please refer to Ma'ād Shināsī, Vol. 9, p. 195.

[209] To learn about the meaning of the word 'La ilaha illa Allah,' refer to Nūr Malakūt Qur'ān, vol. 4, p. 196; Risālah Siyr wa Suluk attributed to Baḥr al-'Ulūm, p. 192.

[210] al-Kāfī, vol. 2. p. 159: Mu'ammar ibn Khallad narrated: I asked Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him): Should I pray for my parents even if they do not know the true religion? Ḥaḍrat said:

اُدعُ لَهُما و تَصَدَّق عَنهُما؛ و إن كانا حَيَّين لا يَعرِفانِ الحَقَّ فَدارِهِما فإنَّ رَسولَ اللهِ صلّى الله عليه و آلِه و سلّم قال: إنَّ اللهَ بَعَثَني بِالرَّحمَةِ لا بِالعُقوق.

Pray for them and give alms on their behalf! And if they are alive and do not know the true religion, then be patient with them; for the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his family) said: God has sent me with mercy, not disobedience, unkindness, or ingratitude.

[211] Quran, 14:41. Mihr Tābān, p. 189.

[212] Quran, 71:28.

[213] Quran, 17:24. Nūr Malakūt Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 132.

[214] Mustadrak al-wasā'il , Vol. 2, p. 113; Makārim al-akhlāq, p. 334.

[215] For more information on the importance of respecting parents and its spiritual effects on the human *nafs* refer to Nūr Malakūt Qur'an, Vol. 1, p. 141: The story of the wanderer who, as a result of serving his mother, had the veil of the kingdom revealed to him.

[216] For more information, refer to Ma'ād Shināsī; Vol. 9, p. 114.

[217] Quran,112.

[218] Awālim al-'ulūm wa al-ma'ārif, Vol. 11, Section 2, p. 857, quoted from Khulāṣa al-Adhkār by the late Fayḍ Kāshānī.

[219] Zahr al-Rabī', p. 7; Anwār An-Nu'mānīyah, vol. 4, p. 71.

[220] For more information on the destruction of the misguided before reaching the world of lights, refer to Ma'ād Shināsī, Vol. 8, p. 161.

[221] al-Mawā'iẓ al-'adīdah, p. 209.